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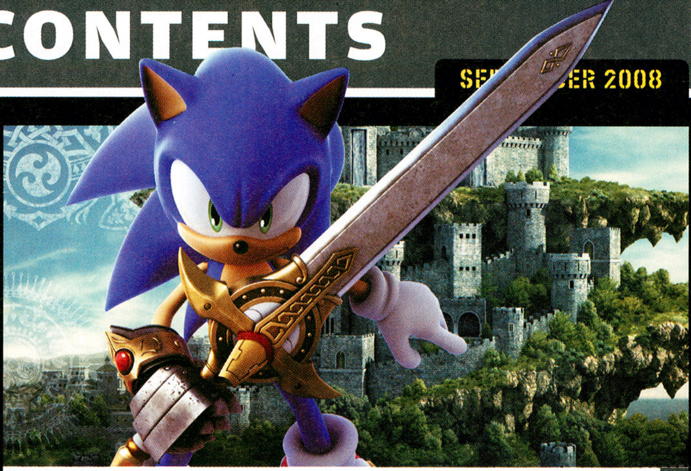

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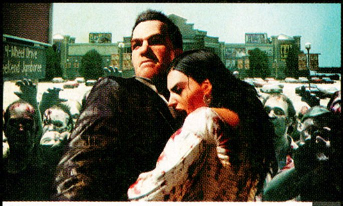

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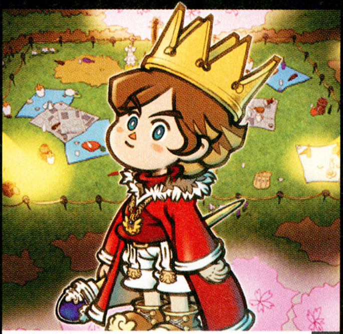

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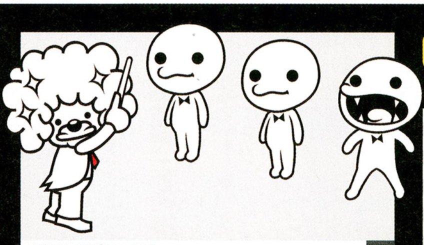

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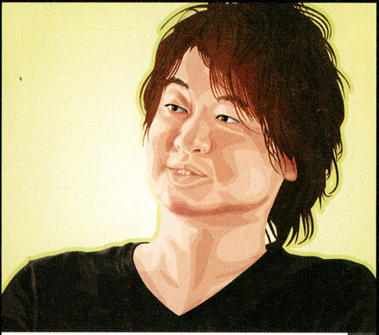

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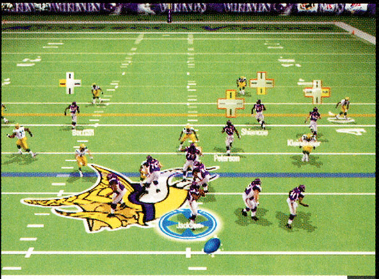

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DS = NINTENDO DS
NES = NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWare

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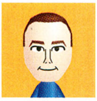
Pulse

Here Comes the Next Big Wave



As I write this, the annual E3 video game convention is about to kick off in Los Angeles, and with it comes a new season of piping-hot games. We've seen some amazing releases so far this year, but many more titles will hit over the next several months, including Nintendo's biggest games for the holidays. We'll have an in-depth E3 report next month, but that doesn't mean we don't have plenty of new-game goodness for you in this very issue. Hot on the heels of Sonic Unleashed and Sonic Chronicles, Sonic and the Black Knight looks to further cement the Hedgehog's return to glory. Wario Land: Shake It! is a blast, bringing old-school 2D platforming to Wii in cool new ways. And Mario Super Sluggers offers a cool adventure along with arcade-style baseball. There's plenty more where those games came from, so let's hurry up and get this issue started!

Mario Super Sluggers kicks off the busy gaming season for Wii in August.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

[LETTERS]

We had an enormous response to last month's 20th Anniversary issue, especially with regards to Mega Man 9, Castlevania Judgment, and our Best of the Best game rankings. Thanks so much for your enthusiastic letters. This month I'd like to ask your opinion on the Metroid series—with the Prime trilogy over, what direction would you like to see it take?

THANKS, NP

In the 15-plus years that I have read Nintendo Power, I've never written to Pulse. Don't get me wrong, I love reading every single letter that other readers send in, but I've never gotten around to sending one in myself until today.

I was reading the 20th Anniversary Issue and noticed that a majority of the letters were from people whose first video game experience was with the Nintendo 64. The first thing that came to mind was, "Boy, am I old." My first system was the good ol' NES, and over the years Nintendo would continue to amaze me with the Super NES, N64, GameCube, Wii, and all of its handhelds.

Thank you very much, Nintendo Power, for being there for me as I tried to master many challenging games for all those systems. If it weren't for your tips, strategies (such as those wonderful hand-drawn maps in NP's early years), and strategy guides, I probably wouldn't be the addicted gamer that I am today.

I'm such a gamer, in fact, that I have taken Guitar Hero III to work! I am a middle school mathematics teacher, so you should have seen the looks on my students' faces when I annihilated them on Expert!

Keep up the good work and I promise to be a subscriber until the very last issue is printed.

JOSEPH B.

Thanks for the very kind words, Joseph! As a recent addition to the team, but a longtime reader of the magazine, I feel the exact same way about Nintendo Power. And can I just say that you must be the coolest teacher ever?

THIS WON'T END WELL

The 20th Anniversary issue was one of the best since the days of old. The nostalgia level reached the moon with the return of Mega Man, Castlevania, and the greatest thing since pickled bratwurst, Nester. So many great games were revealed this issue that I'm going to quit my job, sell everything (except for my Wii and TV), wear adult diapers (can't have any interruptions now, can we?), and devote myself completely to gaming. Thanks for helping me make the best decision of my life!

RAYZ A.

Glad you enjoyed the issue, but can you do us a favor and hide any copies of our magazine before the news cameras eventually arrive?

COLLECT EVERY ONE

Could you guys send me an action figure of each of you? It would be so awesome to have the NP crew in my room! Could you also include catch phrases? I could turn to you guys whenever I need help with a game! It would be *so awesome*!!!

MATT F.

Ironically, it was the explosive awesomeness of our action figures that required them to be taken off the market, as they posed a threat to small children. Our kung-fu grips alone could snap G.I. Joes in half like twigs, and our catch phrases—as poetic, witty, and thought-provoking as they were—made the Transformers sound stupid.

GONE TO THE DOGS

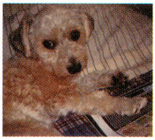
When my brother was hogging our Wii one day, I pulled out the GameCube from our cupboard since I had a strong need to play some games. A few days later, I found my dog resting her head on it! Do you think I can get her to use my Wii as a pillow, too?

ANIME BLACK FOX

One day while I was sitting on my bed reading an issue of Nintendo Power, I felt the urge to use the bathroom. When I came back, I found my dog sitting on my bed staring at a page with her paw on it. Luckily I was able to get a shot of this rare sitting. Does the NP staff think this is normal, or is my dog starting to develop some kind of urge to read Nintendo Power?

(NO NAME GIVEN)

Oh, don't give me that "puppy dog" look, you...puppy dogs. I mean it. Your cuteness won't work on...on.... Wanna play Brawl?



Guys, you fed your pets, right? Don't let those marathon gaming sessions get in the way of other responsibilities. Also important: blinking and breathing.

STALKING WITH LOVE

Welcome to operation J.U.S.T.I.N. C.H.E.N.G.! I watch every move he makes. Did you notice that he is starting to become a grumpy reviewer? He gave the Incredible Hulk a 3.5, and his review of We Love Golf! was mostly full of complaints. Tell him to get the symbiote off him and to go back to his old blue shirt. Don't let the evil consume him!

(NO NAME GIVEN)

I'm afraid that Justin was consumed by evil a long, long time ago...but thanks for caring! I was tempted to figure out what the letters in Justin's name are supposed to stand for in your operation, but I quickly hurt my brain and decided to bring in the experts. Readers...?

REAL-LIFE RYU

I'm as hardcore of a Street Fighter fan as they get. The game played a big role in my life and influenced my decision to pursue a two-decade career in practicing various martial arts. Whether playing in the arcades or on my Super NES, I've always been a fan. Ryu and I both practice Shotokan karate, we're both the same height, weight, hair color, eye color, have big eyebrows, and were born in July. Yes, I am a nerd, but I'm also one that can kick most people's asses. :)

PAUL G.

Okay Paul, we're convinced: you're on the NPZDF (Nintendo Power Zombie Defense Force). You'll report directly to Mr. T, which may irk Chuck Norris, who still hasn't forgiven us for promoting Sgt. Slaughter over him all those years ago. Watch your back!

BEST OF THE BEST

I agree with most of the games on your Best of the Best lists (Vol. 231), but I couldn't let you get away with not including Harvest Moon 64. It's the best in the series and one of the best N64 titles overall.... Grumble grumble.

ANDREW W.

I was shocked to see that The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess made the top 20 list for Wii, but wasn't on the list for GameCube!

DUCK M.

How could you guys not put Tales of Symphonia on your list of GameCube's 20 best games? You said that it was the system's biggest role-playing game in your July 2008 issue, and you once named it the third-best game of 2001. I have played through the game four times and I still find it to be fun and intense. Super Monkey Ball, however.... Come on, guys—let's give credit where credit is due.

CONNOR H.

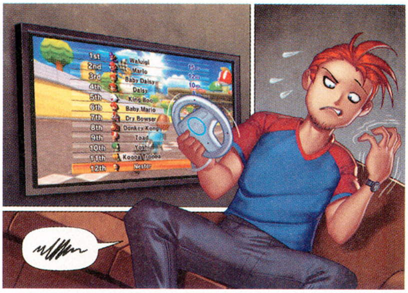
What were you thinking not putting EarthBound on the list of your top 20 Super NES games? It's my favorite RPG of all time and it's the most original, outgoing, and fun RPG there ever was.

(NO NAME GIVEN)

I was thrilled when I saw Rocket: Robot on Wheels ranked at number 18 on your Best of the Best list for N64. This title may not have received much attention, but it holds a spot as one of my all-time favorite games for its solid mission-based adventure (and it came in a red cartridge!). A message to those who have never played it: find this gem as soon as you can—you won't regret it!

BEAU A.

Believe me; we know that many more deserving games were left off our lists. We only touched on about one percent of each system's catalog; in most cases, the next 20 games for each list would've all still been triple-A titles. Everyone has their own views and our lists are completely open to debate, which is actually why we compiled them—to start a fun and passionate discussion about amazing games. Regard-

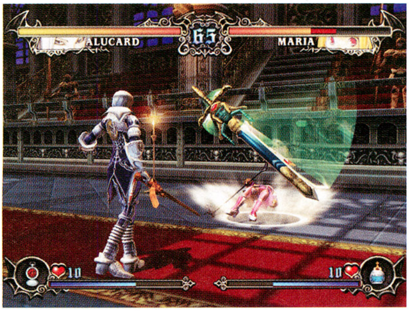


The Nester comic at the beginning of Vol. 231 brought a tear to my eye. It's great to see him older and with a kid, since many of us who grew up with the NES and those early issues of Nintendo Power are now starting families of our own. My kid's first game won't be the latest Wii blockbuster, but good-old Super Mario Bros.

CAMERON T.

I'm glad you enjoyed it, Cameron! When I joined the magazine late last year, my first thought was, "We've got to bring Nester back for the 20th Anniversary issue!" The character conjures so many memories from my gaming childhood. And I'm with you—no new games for my kid until she can appreciate the classics!

The prophecy speaks of the man with the power to unite the nerds into a world-conquering force for good. Paul, we believe you to be the Chosen One.



There must be a way to make the people at Konami realize just how awful this Castlevania fighting game will turn out. True, I haven't played the game and can't really say how good it will be, but I would much prefer searching through a large castle and fighting lots of monsters to dueling a few of the series' characters one-on-one. I have waited a long time for the series to come to Wii, but this fighting game has crushed my hopes for an amazing Castlevania title.

PETER R.

Ouch. Since last issue's big reveal of Castlevania Judgment, we've heard from many fans that aren't too happy that the series' Wii debut isn't a more traditional installment. But keep two things in mind: first, Konami never said Wii won't ever get a regular Castlevania title, and second, nobody's played Judgment yet—it could be awesome! While I'd personally love to see a new console adventure, I admire series producer Koji Igarashi for trying something new with a series that's done things the same way for years and years.

ing Twilight Princess, we tried to exclude ports of games that were already on other Nintendo platforms, and the Wii version came out first.

AT LONG LAST?

My dearest Wario: I have been pining away for you for many years. I knew from the moment that I saw you try to stop that annoying Toad from entering *your* woods (in the game Wario's Woods) that we were meant to be together. I had been trying to stop that puny Toadette from breaking into *my* forest, and it felt awesome to know that someone was going through the same problem as me. As I watched you from afar I realized how much we have in common. So, how about it? Shall we steal all of Mario's gold coins together? (Though you are much better than gold, my love.)

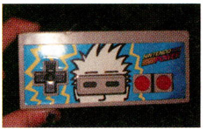
WEACH

Wow, this is the first letter to ever make me spit Mountain Dew out of my nose. Could it be true? Six months after we tried to play matchmaker for Wario in Vol. 226, have we finally made a love connection for ol' Purple Pants? More likely, Waluigi just has too much time on his hands.

ONE RAD PAD

My friend went to Goodwill and bought an old NES for $10 CDN. YAY. Anyways, it turns out that his controller has this totally awesome sticker on it [photo below]. Why don't you guys put cool stuff like this in the magazine anymore?

REBECCA & MICHAEL

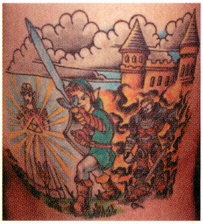


Whoa—has anybody checked to see if Funky Kong is missing his NES pad? I'd love to do something like this again, only stickers sometimes wear out pretty quickly on a well-used controller. Let us know how this one holds up!

OWWWWW....

Here is my rib tattoo of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, my all-time favorite game. The Mario Bros. piece is next.

JUSTIN



Nice work—getting it done must have hurt like crazy! I guess Ocarina has to stay your favorite game; there's no going back now!

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You don't need to send us links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

There's no need to ask about the status of upcoming games; we'll always pass along any updates as soon as we get them.

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SEPTEMBER 16, 2008

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DRAGON QUEST® V
Hand of the Heavenly Bride

DRAGON QUEST® VI
Realms of Reverie

EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
Alcohol Reference
Animated Blood
Mild Fantasy Violence
Mild Language
Simulated Gambling
Suggestive Themes
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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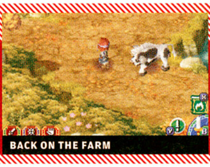
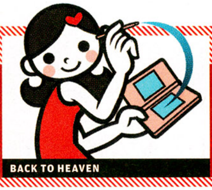
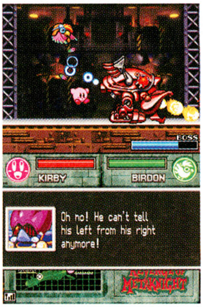
BACK IN THE KITCHEN


BACK ON THE FARM


BACK TO HEAVEN

A Star Is Reborn

A beloved Super NES hit returns on DS as Kirby Super Star Ultra, featuring substantially more content than the original.



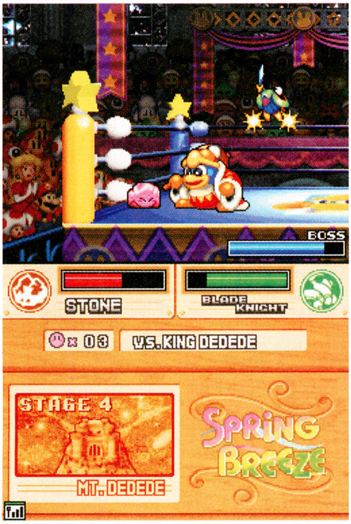
Oh no! He can't tell his left from his right anymore!

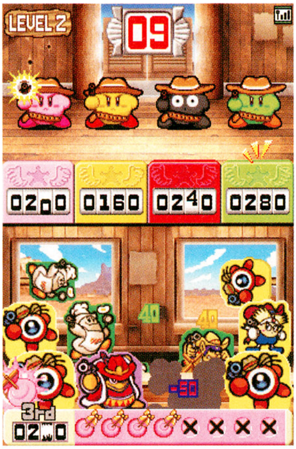
Pink puffball Kirby has always been known for versatility. He can float, he can swim, he can inhale enemies and use them as projectiles, or he can swallow them to learn a seemingly countless number of abilities. He can even hang tough against Mario and Nintendo's other heavy hitters. Soon Kirby will undergo a transformation of epic proportions as he returns to DS in Kirby Super Star Ultra—a significantly enhanced version of the 1996 Super NES classic Kirby Super Star, which is considered by many to be the best game in the voracious hero's storied career.

As fans of the original Kirby Super Star know, the title was touted as including eight Kirby games in one cartridge. Kirby Super Star Ultra kicks things up a notch by including more than 12. All the games in the Super NES version return here, including Spring Breeze (essentially a remake of Kirby's very first game, Kirby's Dream Land), The Great Cave Offensive (an epic treasure hunt), Revenge of Meta Knight (a war against Meta Knight and his ship, the *Halberd*), Gourmet Race (a sprint against King Dedede), Megaton Punch (a timing-based contest of skill), and Samurai Kirby (a quick-draw versus battle). New challenges such as The Revenge of the King (a platforming adventure) and Meta Knight Ultra (in which you play as Meta Knight himself and use a variety of touch-driven skills) are included as well. Improved graphics and new cut-scenes help spruce up the returning game modes, and, as in the original, you'll be able to consume enemies to gain new powers or create helpful partner characters that can be controlled by AI or a friend via local wireless co-op.

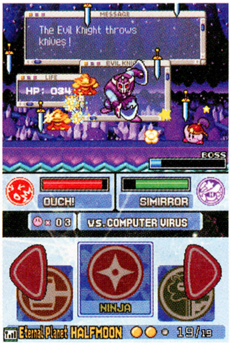
In addition to the 12 main modes, Kirby Super Star Ultra features three all-new touch-screen-based minigames: Kirby Card Swipe, Kirby on the Draw, and Snack Tracks. All three minigames are designed for competitive action with up to three friends, and you can share them via single-card download play.

Fans have been hoping for a revival of Kirby Super Star for ages (it regularly ranks sixth in Nintendo Power's monthly Virtual Console poll), and it won't be long before their wishes come true. Look for it in stores on September 29. —**CHRIS H.**





[Above] Kirby on the Draw is one of three new touch-driven multiplayer minigames. [Left] Even Mario appears to cheer Kirby on to victory.



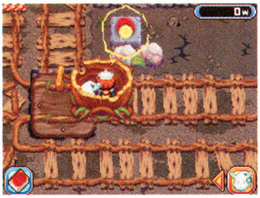
The Evil Knight throws knives!

The 'Bits Keep Coming

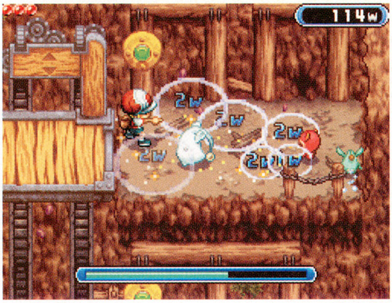
Holster your Wii-remote capture gun and reach for your stylus—Konami's **Elebits** have snuck into your DS.

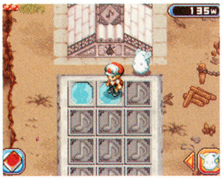
The long-rumored follow-up to one of Wii's earliest games has emerged on the Nintendo DS instead. Elebits: The Adventures of Kai and Zero is a direct sequel to 2006's Elebits, starring young hero Kai and the Zero Elebit he found at the end of his first adventure. This time the pair will work together to hunt the power-generating Elebits—including mysterious new Omega Elebits—in a quest that will finally take them outside of their small town and into the alien world that we saw only a sliver of in the first game. The Elebits they find will grant such abilities as illuminating caves, freezing water, and even reversing gravity, providing the solutions to a wide variety of challenges in this puzzle-focused sequel.

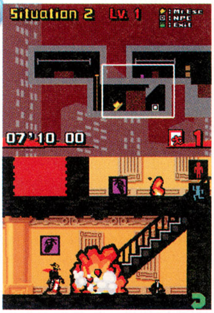
The Adventures of Kai and Zero also features a new competitive multiplayer component that allows up to four players to compete head-to-head via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. —**CASEY L.**



This DS sequel is a radical departure from the first game.







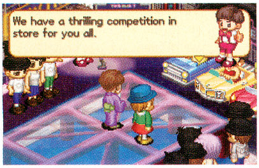
Escape Plan

It's Mr. Esc to the rescue in hard-boiled puzzle-platformer **Exit DS** from Taito.

Originally released for the PSP in 2006, Exit is coming to the DS this October courtesy of Square Enix. The game puts you in the role of Mr. Esc, an escape-artist-for-hire who makes his living by rescuing damsels (and dogs...and fat guys) in distress and leading them to safety. With gameplay reminiscent of classic puzzle-platformers like the original Prince of Persia, Exit offers more than 100 mind-bending levels and a cool noir-style aesthetic. New DS-specific features include stylus controls, and a handy level map that's displayed on the top screen. —**STEVE T.**

Pop Couture

Ever wanted to take a break from saving the princess in order to design her wardrobe? Then Koei's Pop Cutie! Street Fashion Simulation is the game for you. This September DS release lets players manage the day-to-day happenings of their own fashion boutique, hiring models, placing magazine ads, and preparing for Fashion Battles.

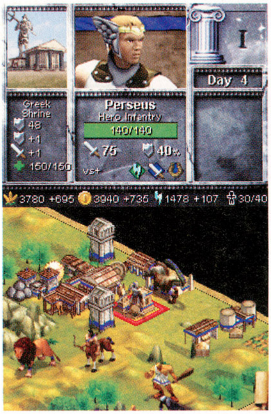


We have a thrilling competition in store for you all.

Coming of Age

The **Age of Empires** series returns to the DS with an exploration of Greek, Norse, and Egyptian mythologies.

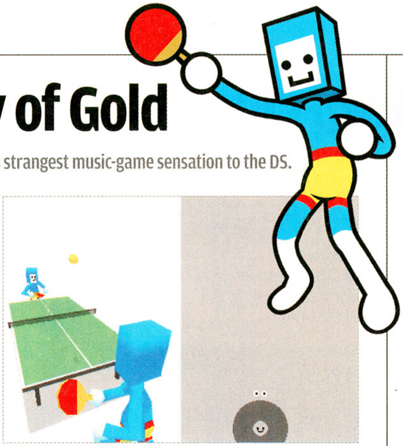
To be published in November by THQ, Age of Empires: Mythologies is inspired by the PC release Age of Mythology and is built using the game engine for DS title Age of Empires: The Age of Kings. The game's turn-based strategizing takes you through three separate campaigns, each centered on an ancient civilization and its relationship with the gods. You'll amass armies in Troy, battle monsters near the Egyptian pyramids, and commune with Thor in the north. If you appease Zeus and other deities, you'll be able to use their weapons—lightning, earthquakes, and plagues—against your enemies. Local wireless and Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection allow for battles between up to four combatants. —**GEORGE S.**



NEWS FROM JAPAN

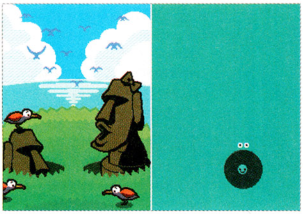
The Ecstasy of Gold

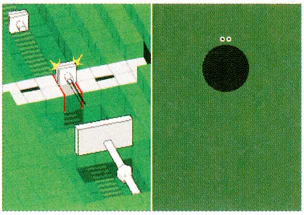
Rhythm Tengoku Gold brings Japan's strangest music-game sensation to the DS.



Despite shipping on the Game Boy Advance two years after the release of the Nintendo DS, Rhythm Tengoku became a surprise word-of-mouth hit in Japan. Its simplicity was its genius: dozens of WarioWare-style mini-games are synced to a song, and players tap a button along with the beats and lyrics.

The new Rhythm Tengoku Gold for the Nintendo DS offers all of the things that made the original great—frenetic pacing, quirky art, and original, up-tempo tunes produced by the legendary Tsunku (well, legendary to the Japanese, apparently). The one big difference is the controls—instead of tapping a button, you'll be using the stylus to slide a touch-screen puck to the rhythm of the song. Will stylus-flicking have the same fundamental appeal as button-tapping? Japanese DS owners will find out when Rhythm Tengoku Gold hits at the end of July, and while no announcement has been made, we're hopeful that a North American release will follow. —CASEY L.

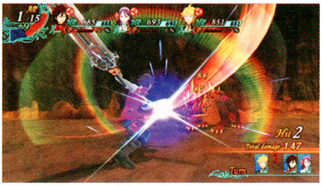


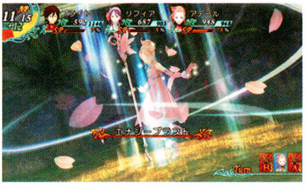


It's About Time

Since it debuted on the Super NES more than 10 years ago, Square Enix's **Chrono Trigger** has been lauded as one of the best RPGs of all time. This holiday season players will get to experience the game's majesty all over again when it comes to DS. While retaining the classic time-traveling story, great battle system, and stellar soundtrack of the original, the DS version will feature numerous upgrades, including a dual-screen presentation, touch-screen control, wireless play, and a brand-new dungeon.

NEWS FROM JAPAN





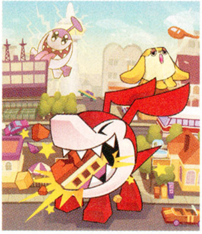
Here There be Dragons

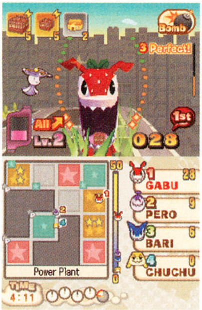
Image Epoch has lifted the veil on their secret Wii RPG, **Arc Rise Fantasia**.

Image Epoch has quietly risen from obscurity to become one of Japan's more prolific developers for Nintendo platforms. In addition to the Luminous Arc series and Sega's upcoming DS RPG World Destruction, the developer has announced an original Wii RPG for Marvelous Entertainment titled Arc Rise Fantasia. The story stars Bright and Arth, two young aristocrats who join a mysterious girl named Lifia (why must the girls always be so mysterious?) to save their kingdom from an infestation of dragons. Arc Rise Fantasia is written and directed by former members of Namco's Tales Studio, so you can expect plenty of twists as the story unfolds.

In ARF's turn-based battle systems, the three heroes share a supply of Ability Points that players can allocate freely. You can dump it all into one character to enable devastating special attacks, or divvy it up to have your fighters work as a team. For example, magical attacks will get a power boost if you have multiple characters target the same enemy with the same spell.

Arc Rise Fantasia looks great, and with a soundtrack from Yasunori Mitsuda (who composed for the Chrono and Xeno series), we're expecting it to be a treat for the ears as well. Hopefully Marvelous's North American partners at XSEED are already eying this one for a U.S. release. —CASEY L.



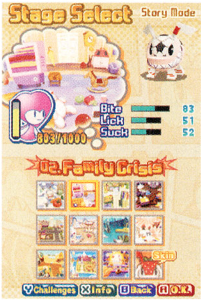


Chow Down

Planet Earth is an all-you-can-eat buffet for the four voracious aliens of **Prey the Stars**.

When eating a washing machine, should you go straight for the chomp or soften it up with a little tongue work first? If you want to avoid being electrocuted, should you chew up a power plant quickly or slowly? These are the conundrums that face the adorable alien invaders of Koei's DS title Prey the Stars as they set about consuming our crisp, tasty planet.

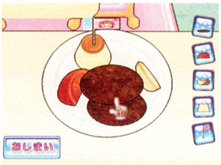
Whether you're playing the solo campaign or the wireless multiplayer mode, Prey the Stars pits four ravenous extraterrestrials against each other in a race to consume everything from parfaits to police stations. You'll have to work your way up by eating small, safe objects to build the size and skills you need to take down larger items. And you'll need to eat strategically, using the right combination of licks, chews, and chomps to grind down each object to an easily digestible size. Prey the Stars promises to be, if nothing else, one of the strangest games you'll ever play. —**CASEY L.**

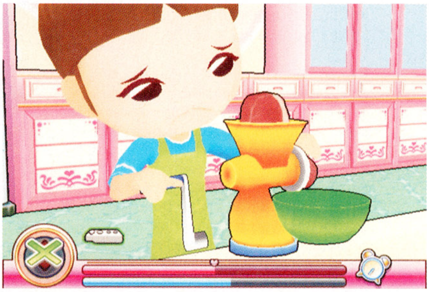


Keep on Cooking

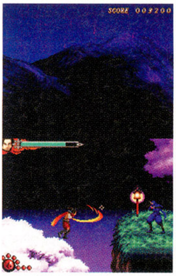
A new look and new play mechanics are on the menu in Majesco's **Cooking Mama World Kitchen** for Wii.

Judging by the success of the Cooking Mama series, gamers have an insatiable appetite for cooking sims, and Majesco is going to continue to feed that need this winter with the release of Cooking Mama World Kitchen for Wii. The basic premise hasn't changed from the franchise's first Wii entry, Cooking Mama: Cook Off—you'll still use the Wii remote to mimic the motions of cooking utensils by slicing, stirring, grilling, grating, and more. You'll also once again be preparing a variety of dishes from around the globe, including ginger pork, shrimp au gratin, potato salad, and California rolls. What has changed, however, is the presentation—the game is now rendered in full 3-D, and you'll get to see your character onscreen performing the actions with you. In addition, the game features new mini-games (such as controlling Mama as she tries to save errantly thrown food), new rhythm-based cooking mechanics, and real-time effects that enhance the cooking experience. —**CHRIS H.**





Cooking Mama World Kitchen features familiar motion-based activities such as grinding meat, now in full 3-D. You can finally see your character!



The Legend Continues

Taito is bringing old-school ninja action back in style with **The Legend of Kage 2** on DS.

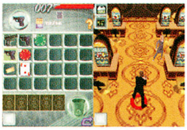
Can you believe it's been a whopping 21 years since we've seen The Legend of Kage on a Nintendo console (not counting last year's Virtual Console release)? While Taito's ninja-centric side-scrolling action game isn't necessarily a classic, it certainly had some good ideas—ideas that the appropriately titled sequel, The Legend of Kage 2, is building upon and enhancing. For example, thanks to the DS's two screens, you've got a lot of vertical real estate to play with as you leap great heights into the treetops, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*-style. More importantly, main character Kage can take a lot more punishment this time around, and the action overall is faster-paced—early on you can defeat most enemy ninjas with quick strikes of your sword or shuriken, and you can unlock more attacks as you progress. There's no word on whether there will be any North America-specific features, but we should have more on The Legend of Kage 2 as its October release approaches.

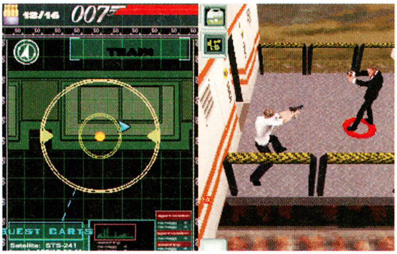
—**JUSTIN C.**

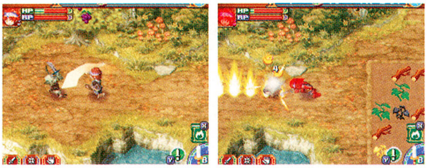
Shaken and Stirred

Her Majesty's most famous superspy gets the video game treatment in **Quantum of Solace**.

There have been a lot of James Bond games over the years, but none quite like this adaptation of upcoming film *Quantum of Solace*. For one, it's both Activision and current Bond actor Daniel Craig's first 007 title. More importantly, developer Vicarious Visions is taking advantage of the DS's unique touch-screen feature: Bond is completely controlled via the stylus, whether he's keeping a low profile or running and gunning. Either approach works—the game lets you play how you want to. In fact, if you don't even want to use firearms at all, you can run up to an enemy and fight him hand-to-hand with what Activision calls "an innovative touch-screen combat system." The touch screen is also used to select responses during story segments, allowing you to acquire new items and abilities if you prove to be a smooth enough talker. A Wii version of Quantum of Solace is on the way as well, though Activision was mum on the subject at press time. Look for both games this November. **—JUSTIN C.**



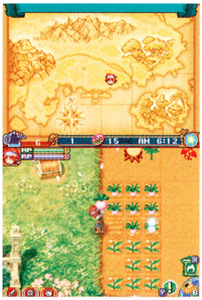




More Swords and Plowshares

Natsume returns to the Kingdom of Norad for more farming and fighting in **Rune Factory 2: A Fantasy Harvest Moon**.

Natsume has announced the sequel to Rune Factory: A Fantasy Harvest Moon for launch later this year on the Nintendo DS. Rune Factory 2 continues the hybrid style of the first game, with players dividing their time between tending the farm, raising monsters, and taking on quests. Details about new gameplay features are still light, but Natsume promises expanded gameplay elements, a promising sign considering the engaging depth of the first title. We do know that Rune Factory 2 picks up the story in the same kingdom a couple of years after the first game, and that the story will extend over several generations—you'll play first as a newcomer to a village, then later as his child (assuming you can woo some nice young lass into marrying you). **—CHRIS SH.**



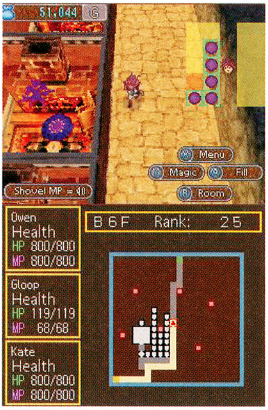
Power Play

The greatest game on ice finally comes to Wii this fall with **NHL 2K9** from Visual Concepts and 2K Sports. Details remain scarce, but 2K Sports promises that the Wii version will include the same feature set found on the other platforms while offering full motion controls and other Wii-specific additions.

Build and Battle

Ground is broken and monsters are slain in Atlus's upcoming DS RPG about a boy, a talking shovel, and a really big hole.

More free-form adventure than epic quest, Master of the Monster Lair has you building and furnishing a dungeon, then making a profit by fighting the creatures that it attracts. Trying to scratch out a living in South Arc, young Owen forms a bond with a magic shovel and fashions himself as a dungeon-digger. He can create 23 types of rooms (such as chapels, stables, and cellars), each designed to bring in different types of beasts. Though Owen and his party members don't build attributes for beating creatures, they do level up by cooking and eating ingredients that they find in dark corners. The mysteries of your own dungeons will be yours to explore and share with friends when the game arrives in September. **—GEORGE S.**



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Mild Fantasy Violence

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GAME WATCH FORECAST

The Gamewatch Forecast already has a lot of exciting games on it, but the list is sure to double in size next month after all of the E3 announcements. Be prepared!

Wii		
Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30	Ubisoft	TBA
Call of Duty: World at War	Activision	11/08
Castlevania Judgment	Konami	FALL 08
Catch of the Day	Electronic Arts	TBA
Cooking Mama World Kitchen	Majesco	WIN 08
Crash: Mind over Mutant	Sierra	10/08
Dance Dance Revolution Hottest Party 2	Konami	FALL 08
de Blob	THQ	9/08
Dead Rising: Chop Till You Drop	Capcom	WIN 08
Defendin' de Penguin	Crave	8/08
The Destiny of Zorro	Pronto Games	TBA
Disaster: Day of Crisis	Nintendo	TBA
Dokapon Kingdom	Atlus	FALL 08
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two Interactive	9/08
Dragonology	Codemasters	Q4 08
FaceBreaker	Electronic Arts	11/08
Ferrari Challenge: Trofeo Pirelli	System 3	8/08
FIFA 09 All-Play	Electronic Arts	2008
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	TBA
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	Sierra	10/08
Gravity	Deep Silver	9/08
Guitar Hero World Tour	Activision	10/08
Harvest Moon: Tree of Tranquility	Natsume	7/08
Indoor Sports	Konami	TBA
King of Clubs	Crave	8/08
The King of Fighters Collection: The Orochi Saga	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	Sierra	10/08
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	Warner Bros. Interactive	FALL 08
Line Rider 2: Unbound	InXile	SUM 08
Little King's Story	XSEED Games	WIN 08
Little League World Series Baseball 2008	Activision	8/08
Littlest Pet Shop	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Lost in Blue: Shipwrecked	Konami	9/08
Madden 09 All-Play	Electronic Arts	8/08
MadWorld	Sega	2009
Major Minor's Majestic March	Majesco	2009
Mario Super Sluggers	Nintendo	TBA
MLB Power Pros 2008	2K Sports	FALL 08
Monster Lab	Eidos	9/08
Mushroom Men: The Spore Wars	Gamecock	10/08
MySims Kingdom	Electronic Arts	2008
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution 2	Tomy	FALL 08
NBA Live 09 All-Play	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Neopets Puzzle Adventure	Capcom	WIN 08
NERF N-Strike	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
NHL 2K9	2K Sports	FALL 08
Pitfall: The Big Adventure	Activision	FALL 08
Pro Bull Riding: Out of the Chute	Crave	10/08
Rock Band 2	MTV Games	2008
Rock Revolution	Konami	FALL 08
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Rygar: The Battle of Argus	Tecmo	8/08
Sam & Max Season One	The Adventure Company	FALL 08
Samba de Amigo	Sega	8/08
Samurai Shodown Anthology	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
Secret Files: Tenguska	Deep Silver	FALL 08
Shaun White Snowboarding	Ubisoft	2008
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	9/08
SimCity Creator	Electronic Arts	9/08
Skate It	Electronic Arts	12/08
SNK Arcade Classics Vol. 1	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
Solitaire & Mahjong	Crave	9/08
Sonic and the Black Knight	Sega	2009
Sonic Unleashed	Sega	Q4 08
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	Activision	FALL 08
Spyborgs	Capcom	2009
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Lightsaber Duels	LucasArts	FALL 08
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	9/08
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09 All-Play	Electronic Arts	8/08
TNA iMPACT!	Midway	9/08
Tomb Raider: Underworld	Eidos	11/08
Ultimate Band	Disney Interactive	9/08
Wario Land: Shake It!	Nintendo	9/08
We Cheer	Namco Bandai	FALL 08
Wizardology	Codemasters	Q4 08
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	THQ	FALL 08

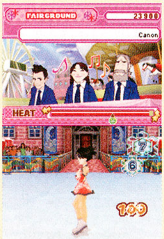
NINTENDO DS		
Age of Empires: Mythologies	THQ	FALL 08
Away: Shuffle Dungeon	Majesco	Q3 08
Bangai-O Spirits	D3 Publisher	8/08
Big Bang Mini	SouthPeak	FALL 08
Bleach: Dark Souls	Sega	8/08
Blood Bowl	Focus Home Interactive	2008
Brave: Shaman's Challenge	SouthPeak Interactive	8/08
Broken Sword	Ubisoft	9/08
Call of Duty: World at War	Activision	11/08
Castlevania: Order of Ecclesia	Konami	FALL 08
Catch of the Day	Electronic Arts	TBA
Chrono Trigger	Square Enix	Q4 08
Commando: Steel Disaster	XS Games	8/08
Construction Combat: Lock's Quest	THQ	FALL 08
Crash: Mind over Mutant	Sierra	10/08
de Blob	THQ	9/08
Defendin' de Penguin	Crave	8/08
Digimon World Championship	Namco Bandai	8/08
Dinosaur King	Sega	8/08
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Disgaea DS	NIS America	9/08
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two Interactive	9/08
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragon Quest IV	Square Enix	9/08
Dragon Quest V	Square Enix	TBA
Dragon Quest VI	Square Enix	TBA
Dragonology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Drawn to Life: SpongeBob SquarePants Edition	THQ	FALL 08
Elebits: The Adventures of Kai and Zero	Konami	8/08
Exit	Taito	9/08
Ferrari Challenge: Trofeo Pirelli	System 3	8/08
From the Abyss	Aksys	2008
Gauntlet	Eidos	9/08
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	Sierra	10/08
Gravity	Deep Silver	9/08
Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness	Natsume	7/08
The Humans	Deep Silver	9/08
Infinite Line	Sega	2009
Kirby Super Star Ultra	Nintendo	9/08
Last King of Africa	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
The Legend of Kage 2	Taito	9/08
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	Sierra	10/08
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	Warner Bros. Interactive	FALL 08
Line Rider 2: Unbound	InXile	SUM 08
Little League World Series Baseball 2008	Activision	8/08
Littlest Pet Shop	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Master of the Monster Lair	Atlus	9/08
Metal Slug 7	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
MLB Power Pros 2008	2K Sports	FALL 08
Moon	Mastiff	Q4 08
Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi	Gamecock Media Group	10/08
MySims Kingdom	Electronic Arts	2008
Mystery Case Files: MillionHeir	Nintendo	9/08
Naruto: Path of the Ninja 2	Tomy	9/08
National Geographic Panda	Namco Bandai	11/08
NERF N-Strike	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Neopets Puzzle Adventure	Capcom	WIN 08
Ninjatown	SouthPeak Interactive	10/08
Pet Vet Down Under	Deep Silver	FALL 08
PipeMania	Empire Interactive	9/08
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Pop Cutie! Street Fashion Simulation	Koei	9/08
Prey the Stars	Koei	9/08
Prince of Persia: The Fallen King	Ubisoft	FALL 08
Princess on Ice	Aksys	WIN 08
Professor Branium	Destineer	Q3 08
Puzzle Quest: Galactrix	D3PA	10/08
Quantum of Solace	Activision	11/08
Red Bull BC One	Ignition	TBA
Rhapsody: A Musical Adventure	NIS America	9/08
Robocalypse	TBA	FALL 08
Rock Revolution	Konami	FALL 08
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Rune Factory 2: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	Natsume	FALL 08
Secret Files: Tenguska	Deep Silver	FALL 08
SimCity Creator	Electronic Arts	9/08
Skate It	Electronic Arts	12/08
Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood	Sega	FALL 08
Spectrobes: Beyond the Portals	Disney Interactive	10/08
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	Activision	FALL 08
Spore Creatures	Electronic Arts	9/08
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Jedi Alliance	LucasArts	FALL 08
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	9/08
Tecmo Bowl: Kickoff	Tecmo	FALL 08
Theresia	Aksys	FALL 08
Time Hollow	Konami	FALL 08
Tornado	Ignition	TBA
TrackMania DS	Focus Home Interactive	Q4 08
Transformers Animated	Activision	FALL 08
Ultimate Band	Disney Interactive	9/08
Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise	THQ	FALL 08
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA
A Witch's Tale	NIS America	10/08
Wizardology	Codemasters	Q4 08
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	THQ	FALL 08
Zubo	Electronic Arts	2008

BITS OF TID

Can't Stop the Rock

A Wii sequel to Rock Band is on the way.

Given the immense popularity of Rock Band, it's no surprise that a sequel is in the works. Publisher MTV Games promises that Rock Band 2 will give you everything you expect (new tracks and instruments) and more. No word on any Wii-exclusive features yet, but we'll know more soon.



Ice Ice Baby

Unleash your inner figure skater in Princess on Ice.

Aksys Games' Princess on Ice will let you live out your figure-skating fantasies on DS with customizable characters, classical tunes, and rhythm-based gameplay. The screen-tapping action is similar to that of Elite Beat Agents.

It's Not Over, Prime

The Transformers roll out once more on DS.

Based on the lastest incarnation of the robots in disguise currently airing on Cartoon Network, Transformers Animated heads exclusively to DS this fall. Players will be able to choose from a full roster of Autobots as they solve team-based puzzles, race through the streets of a futuristic Detroit, and, of course, bust some Decepitchops.

RED TEXT = TITLES ADDED THIS MONTH *TENTATIVE TITLE NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE

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Wii Channels

We've got something different this month—an interview with a man who stars in his own Virtual Console game. Plus: the latest Channels news, previews, and reviews.

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Game Master Takahashi Meijin Speaks

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New Content for Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: My Life as a King

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- FATAL FURY 2
- SAMURAI SHODOWN

Master Blaster

We get hardcore and old-school with legendary gaming expert Takahashi Meijin.

Hudson veteran Takahashi Meijin might not exactly be a household name in North America, but in Japan he's the stuff of legends. Not only is he known for having the fastest trigger finger in video games—he was able to fire an astounding 16 shots per second in the 8-bit classic Star Force—but he was immortalized as the main character (named Master Higgins outside of Japan) in Hudson's Adventure Island series. This gaming master—whose real name is Toshiyuki Takahashi—recently visited the US for the first time in nearly 20 years, and Nintendo Power took the opportunity to speak with him about Virtual Console, WiiWare, and all things retro. –**CHRIS H.**

NINTENDO POWER **How has gaming changed, in your opinion, since the 8- and 16-bit days?**

TAKAHASHI MEIJIN I think that the true nature and characteristics of playing games hasn't actually changed at all. The playfulness is still there. But the graphics and the music—they have definitely gotten so much better and so much more realistic. The only thing that I see as sort of a negative development from the classic games to games these days is that it's a lot more about destruction.

I think that when it comes to shooting games, it used to be the focus was on the shooting—you as a shooter. But it has come to a point where the enemies shoot at you so much that I feel it has become more about dodging the bullets, not so much about how good are you at being able to shoot a target. I think that's kind of too bad. But Star Soldier R, the WiiWare game, is a lot more focused on the shooting, not just dodging things. I think that's fun.

What do you think about new players getting to experience classic and classic-style games on Virtual Console and WiiWare?

To be able to play those kinds of classic games is actually kind of deceiving, because the graphics and music may be simple, but the actual art of what's involved in playing the game is actually still quite difficult.... I think it's a good way for people to get exposed to different kinds of gaming, especially because those were the ones that I enjoyed the most. I visited a couple of retailers yesterday, and I noticed that they weren't carrying any of the classic games, especially the ones from the Super Nintendo era. So it's a great way for people to be able to get a hold of vintage games without much of a hassle. It's pretty cool.

What are the first classic Hudson games that players should download on Virtual Console if they've never played a Hudson game before?

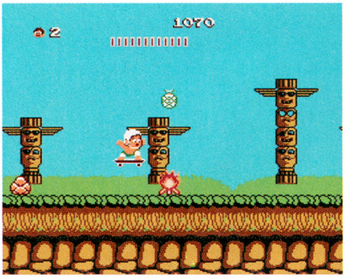
That's very difficult! There are too many to choose from! Action games, shooting games...Adventure Island, of course! And Star Soldier. Those two are my top picks.

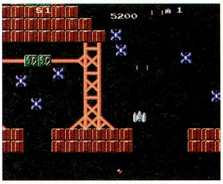
What are some classic games that you'd like to see on Virtual Console that haven't arrived yet? Especially anything that never came to North America originally?

Well, I want to see every game on Virtual Console! If it wasn't a matter of copyright, I would have everything out there! There's a [graphic-text] adventure game in Japan called Sadakichi Seven. And it was kind of [a parody of] James Bond 007 here in the States.

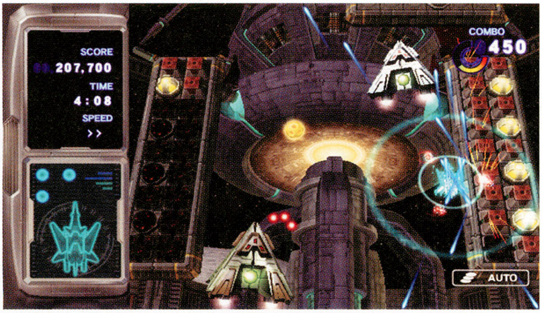
Obviously you're known for your rapid-fire shooting ability. What's your secret?

Nothing! I really started to be able to shoot as fast as I did without realizing it. I





Master Takahashi recommends picking up Adventure Island [left] and Star Soldier [above] as your first Hudson Virtual Console downloads.



Try to beat the master's 16-shots-per-second record in WiiWare shooter Star Soldier R.

never really practiced. In 1985, as a Hudson employee, I went on a tour around the country to demonstrate this game called Star Force.... And when a kid realized that I was really fast at getting rid of the enemies, he was asking me how fast I was actually firing. And that's when they timed it for the first time and realized that I was shooting 16 times in one second.

Can you still fire off 16 shots per second?
No! About 12 or 13.

What can players do if they aspire to the same level of mastery?
I think that having a celebrity status as a game master is kind of misunderstood.... I feel like I want to be more of an ambassador [for] everything playful, including games, and I happen to be really good at games, but I want to make sure that my message is not, "If you want to be as good as me, stay home and only play video games for, like, 14 hours straight!" I don't want that to be the message.

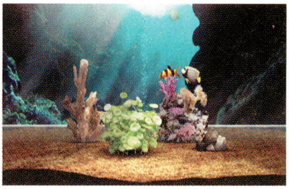
Speaking of being a master gamer, are there any games that you haven't been able to beat?
There's a Japanese game that's called Brain Warship Galg for the Famicom. [It] was a role-playing game with shooting-game characteristics. You have to collect 100 items in order for you to clear it. And even if you miss one item, you couldn't clear. So it... was really tedious in terms of what you have to accomplish. You almost have to play the perfect game before you could clear it, so I thought that was a challenge.

Do you prefer to play games from the classic era or games of today?
You know, I like games from all eras. There are certain games that I feel were better before, but there are some games like Star Soldier that I feel the current version is better. It really depends on what game it is. I like the classic version of Bomberman.

Speaking of which, we're glad to see that games like Bomberman and Alien Crush and Star Soldier are on or are coming to WiiWare. Are there any other classic Hudson properties you'd like to see revived on Wii?
Lode Runner. It's simple, yet it's a very good game. I would like to see that available on WiiWare because I feel that...the technology now would make it even better. Having it available through WiiWare would be a phenomenal thing.

What about Bonk?
In Japan, Bonk is ultimately mischievous. He's kind of this playful yet really mischievous boy, whereas the way it's translated in the American version of Bonk, it kind of lost that original mischievousness. I think that it would play better for the game if we brought that characteristic back.

What did you think of having your character, Master Higgins, appear in Dream Mix TV: World Fighters on GCN, where he could battle Solid Snake and the Transformers?
I wanted to do a lot more of it! Because it was a coproject between Konami, Takara, and Hudson, I feel like there was more room to do a series of it. I feel that with games like Smash Bros. out there, there's room to do another version and another version. Basically do more of that.... I feel like it would be the ideal situation if every single character from every single game from every publisher can sort of come together and do an all-star [game]. I know it's difficult, but I think that's the most exciting thing that could happen for players and masters alike.

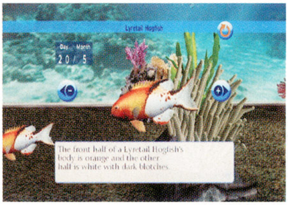


Fantasy Fish Tank

Hudson's customizable underwater environment gives you the enjoyment of having fish without the hassle of keeping them alive.

More interesting than a fireplace DVD, more engaging than a screen saver, My Aquarium is a virtual fish habitat that offers a surprising amount of interactivity and a few unexpected twists. In real life owning a fish tank requires daily maintenance and a little bit of chemistry. In Hudson's upcoming WiiWare outing, you need not worry about pH balance, water toxicity, or even fish food. You can mix and match 40 types of true-to-life freshwater and saltwater creatures, such as jellyfish, groupers, and Lyretail hogfish, and feed them only when you want to watch them eat. If you leave them alone for a while, you won't discover any fish floating at the top of the tank when you come back, but you may find a new finned friend sent to you via WiiConnect24 by another My Aquarium enthusiast. You can return the favor by shipping off one of your own fish. While stocking and watching up to six different aquariums, you select each tank's glass color, lighting, background, fish-food types, and even the style of the gravel and rocks. By gathering information from the Wii's Forecast channel, the game simulates local weather in your tanks. Though you don't have to know anything about your fish to keep them swimming, you can learn about them by consulting the title's fish database. The simulation may prove to be an instructional first step to owning an actual tank.

—GEORGE S.



The front half of a Lyretail Hogfish's body is orange and the other half is white with dark blotches

DLC Fit for a King

The fantasy is never final thanks to new optional content for **Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: My Life as a King.**

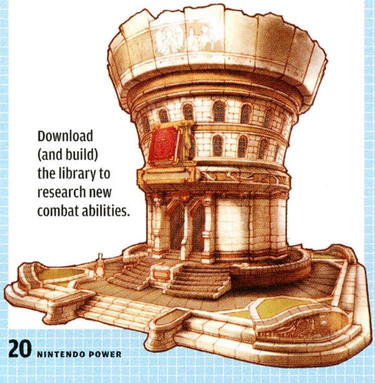
WiiWare kingdom-builder Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: My Life as a King continues to grow, with another recently released batch of optional downloadable content. This month's downloads feature a pair of new costumes and a handful of new dungeon areas, all of which are being sold separately.

Summer is the theme for a new pair of costumes you can buy for the castle closet. New Royal Outfit 2 unlocks "Fresh King," which gives your young monarch a dickey-style shirt and short shorts that would look cute on, say, Chime. But for a little boy... not so much. Chime herself has better fashion sense—New Chancellor Outfit 2 unlocks the Summer Chime outfit with a skirt and bikini top. Each costume costs 100 points.

The Castle Renovation DLC will add the level-26 Tempora Estuary dungeon to your area map. Those who clear it will unlock Chime's Room in the castle, where you can listen to the game's music on her jukebox, pull up various lists of data, and rename your adventurers. Not bad for a mere 100 points!

Buy the Library for 200 points, and you'll unlock the level-40 Land of O'Kokuh dungeon area. The prize for clearing that is the ability to construct a library in town, where you can fund research into race-specific combat abilities for your adventurers to buy. The abilities are powerful, but you'll need to have already bought the extra race packs to make it worth your while.

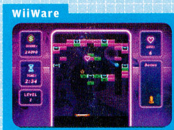
The Infinity Spire creates a multilevel dungeon area of the same name. The first floor is listed at level 10, but whenever you defeat one of the Spire's superbosses (no easy task) you'll earn a new medal and unlock a more challenging floor. High-level adventurers will never run out of things to do at the Infinity Spire, but 300 points is a lot to pay for an area you'll never get to visit personally. —CASEY L.



Download (and build) the library to research new combat abilities.

DOWNLOAD STATION

WiiWare



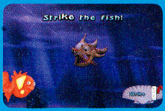
BLOCK BREAKER DELUXE

PUBLISHER: **GAMELOFT**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **800**

We've seen the brick-busting formula umpteen times, but Gameloft's one-or-two-player WiiWare entry is the most ambitious of its type. Not only are the brick layouts plentiful and well-designed, but a storyline, money system, and level bosses move the game along at a brisk pace. Chances to continue are easy to come by. However, they deplete your cash, and you need lots of money to reach the top goals. —GEORGE S.

Recommended

WiiWare



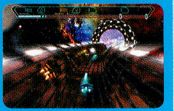
COCOTO FISHING MASTER

PUBLISHER: **NEKO ENT.**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
Wii POINTS: **700**

Appealing graphics and a bizarre save-the-world-by-fishing story can't disguise the fact that Cocoto Fishing Master lacks fundamentals. Its easy enough to cast a line with a flick of the remote and reel in a fish with a circular motion of the nunchuk, but getting the fish to grab and hold on to the bait is extremely nonintuitive. Also, selling fish to buy bait leaves very little cash for anything else, making your progress glacially slow. —GEORGE S.

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare



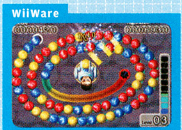
GYROSTARR

PUBLISHER: **HIGH VOLTAGE**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
Wii POINTS: **700**

Gyrostarr is sort of like Tempest meets F-Zero—your ship travels along tracks of various shapes as you blast enemies, snag energy pick-ups, and dodge incoming fire. Unfortunately, it lacks the white-knuckle intensity that makes those aforementioned franchises great. Co-op mode is cool, and with 50 stages there's plenty of content here, but the action just isn't exciting enough to garner a whole-hearted recommendation. —STEVE T.

Hmmm...

WiiWare



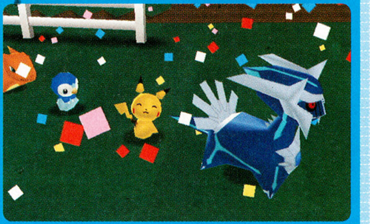
MAGNETICA TWIST

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **1000**

Following in the footsteps of its DS cousin, Magnetica Twist offers more color-matching, marble-blasting gameplay. It's not as fun as Dr. Mario (also on WiiWare), but the puzzle action can be addictive, especially in the single-player challenge mode. Numerous multiplayer modes add a lot of value, but at times I found myself wishing for traditional controls; my wrist's inability to spin 360 degrees sometimes hampered my fun. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

WiiWare



MY POKÉMON RANCH

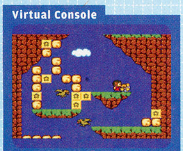
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** • GENRE: **POKÉMON INTERACTION**
Wii POINTS: **1000**

Scott P's Pick

Life on My Pokémon Ranch is peaceful, funny, and often surprising. Pokémon and Miis (duded up in cowboy hats and jeans) perform impromptu dances, play with toys, and express affection—a far cry from traditional Pokémon adventures. Battles are taboo—the emphasis is on populating the ranch and snapping fun pics of the antics, then posting them for friends. Head rancher Hayley brings a new Pokémon daily at the beginning of the game, and you can introduce your own from Pokémon Diamond or Pokémon Pearl via an easy DS-to-Wii transfer. For battle-weary Trainers, MPR is a holiday from stress.

Recommended

Virtual Console



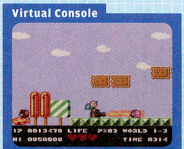
ALEX KIDD IN MIRACLE WORLD

PLATFORM: **MASTER SYSTEM**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1986**

Alex Kidd boasts nice, colorful graphics, an impressive number of vehicles to take a ride on, and tunes that I can still whistle 22 years after I first played it. Platform-jumping is fun despite slippery controls, and punching stuff is satisfying (although often inaccurate). Sometimes you'll want to drop-kick the people who made this game, but Kidd will keep you coming back. **—CHRIS SL.**

Recommended

Virtual Console



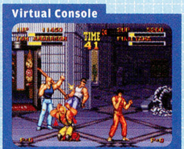
BIO MIRACLE BOKUTTE UPA

PLATFORM: **NES**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1988**

If there was ever a baby game for babies, this is it. I mean that literally—you play as a baby. A hardcore baby. As far as the gameplay goes, this unique platformer is actually deceptively challenging, and it offers some unusual, cool mechanics like turning enemies into platforms. It's not mindblowing, but as a rarely seen import it's worth checking out for platformer fans. **—CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

Virtual Console



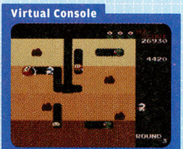
BURNING FIGHT

PLATFORM: **NEOGEO**
PUBLISHER: **D4/SNK**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1991**

I'm a big fan of side-scrolling beat-'em-ups, but even I'll admit that Burning Fight isn't exactly the pinnicle of the genre. It offers mindless fun and a decent variety of enemies and weapons, but compared to similar games of its era (Final Fight, for example), Burning Fight suffers from lackluster animation and cheap enemies. Plus, the ease of beating up your ally spoils the enjoyment of co-op mode. **—CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

Virtual Console



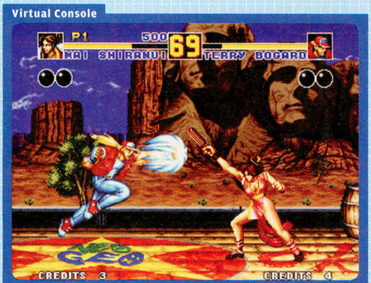
DIG DUG

PLATFORM: **NES**
PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1985**

An NES game has to be something special to withstand the test of time, and while Dig Dug is still fun, the game doesn't offer the replay value of other VC titles. And even though Dig Dug's been included in compilations on nearly every system known to man, its NES incarnation never hit the US—thus the 600-point import price tag. Unless you really love Dig Dug, you can probably find a better value. **—TOM H.**

Hmmm...

Virtual Console



FATAL FURY 2

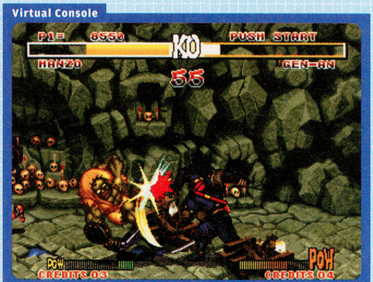
PLATFORM: **NEOGEO** • PUBLISHER: **D4/SNK**
GENRE: **FIGHTING** • ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1992**

Chris H's Pick

Let's be honest—the original Fatal Fury wasn't very good. This sequel is where the series really started to hit its stride, thanks in no small part to an expanded cast that introduced favorites such as Kim Kaphwan, Jubei Yamada, and bouncy ninja girl Mai Shiranui. It's certainly no Street Fighter II, but the solid one-on-one combat is full of technique, and the desperation attacks—as well as the series' dual-planed stages—separate it from other fighters of its day.

Recommended

Virtual Console



SAMURAI SHODOWN

PLATFORM: **NEOGEO** • PUBLISHER: **D4/SNK**
GENRE: **FIGHTING** • ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1993**

Justin C's Pick

Years before Soulcalibur, there was weapons-based fighter Samurai Shodown. With its combination of easy-to-learn-yet-tactical one-on-one gameplay, a memorable cast of characters, and a surprising amount of violence (though it's still nowhere near as gory as Mortal Kombat), Samurai Shodown holds a special place in the hearts of many gamers. If you consider yourself a fighting fan, Samurai Shodown is well worth your Wii points.

Recommended

WANTED!

In a not-so-shocking development, Earthbound continues to dominate the readers' most-wanted list. Super Smash Bros., however, rose a notch, bypassing perennial favorite Chrono Trigger. Is Square Enix's recent announcement of a DS version of Chrono Trigger satiating the fans hungry for this classic time-hopping RPG?

READERS' MOST WANTED

1 Earthbound (Super NES)
2 Mother (NES/Japan only)
3 Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars (Super NES)
4 Super Smash Bros. (N64)
5 Chrono Trigger (Super NES)

NP STAFF'S MOST WANTED

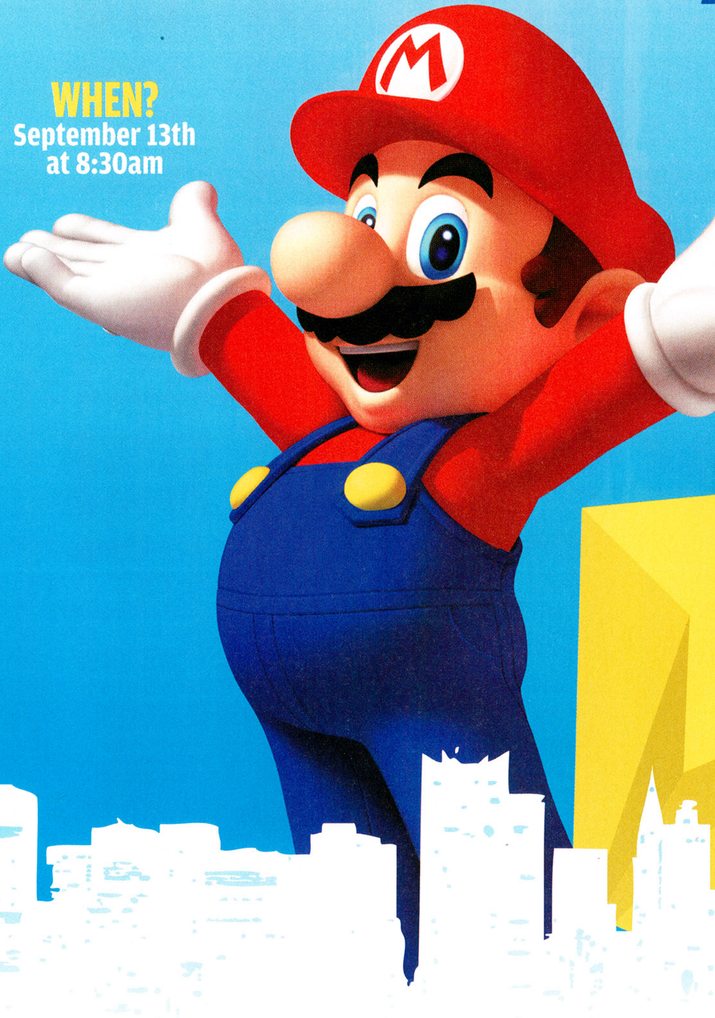
1 Castlevania: Rondo of Blood (TurboGrafx CD/Japan only)
2 Mega Man: The Wily Wars (Sega Genesis/Europe & Japan)
3 Terranigma (Super NES/Europe & Japan)

4 Super Punch-Out!! (Super NES)
5 Gradius II (NES/Japan only)

What classic games do you want to see come to Virtual Console? Send us up to five picks at **vcpoll@futureus.com**. Remember, we only accept votes for systems currently represented on Virtual Console. We'll print the results in an upcoming issue. Note: This is for polling purposes only, and will in no way determine future Virtual Console releases.

Come Join Us at Nintendo Power's 20th Anniversary Bash!

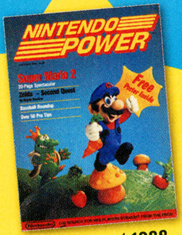
20th ANNIVERSARY
NINTENDO POWER
1988 – 2008



WHEN?
September 13th
at 8:30am

WHERE?
Nintendo World
in New York City's
Rockefeller Plaza

Our first
issue!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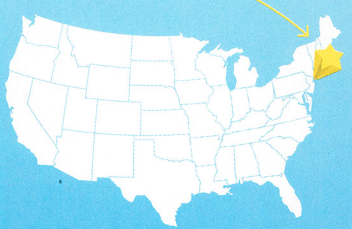
July/August 1988



Put on your finest white gloves and wax your moustache, because you are invited to the Nintendo World store for a Nintendo Power party 20 years in the making!

When we open the doors at 8:30am on September 13, 2008, the first 400 people in line with any issue of Nintendo Power will cross the velvet rope into our private party. (Come dressed as a Nintendo character for a chance to win prizes!) Partygoers will play new Wii and Nintendo DS games, hang out with the Nintendo Power staff, and walk away with lots of free goodies.

The best part is that its all for a good cause. In appreciation for your support for Nintendo Power these past 20 years, gaming companies such as CDV, Gamecock, and Konami are raising awareness and funding for the Starlight Starbright Children's Foundation, which brings games and much more to seriously ill kids and their families. Be sure to come out and how your support!

YOU COULD WIN A TRIP TO OUR BIRTHDAY PARTY!

Visit www.nintendopower.com/party and enter for the chance to win one of four trips for two to New York City to attend our 20th Anniversary Bash or any of the second and third prizes!

See you at Nintendo World!

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THIS MONTH IN PREVIEWS

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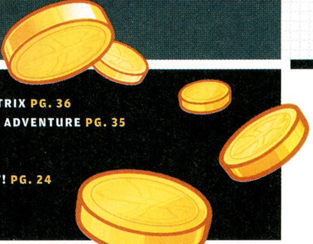
ZUBO PG. 30



Shake, Waddle, And Roll

> WARIO LAND: SHAKE IT!

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **GOOD FEEL** • RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2008**

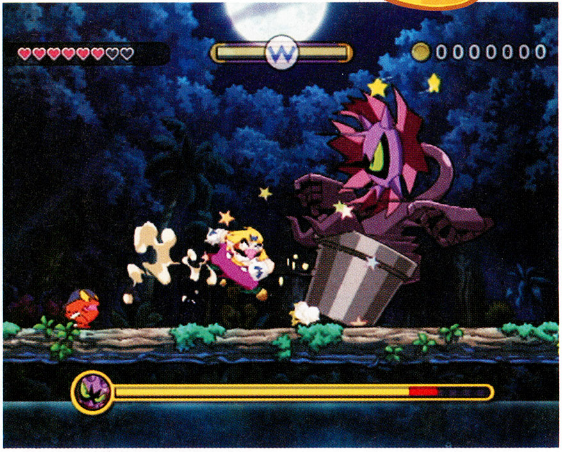
After a seven-year absence, the series that made Wario a star will return this September with its first-ever console installment, Wario Land: Shake It! for Wii. All of the platform-hopping, puzzle-solving, treasure-collecting, and enemy-bullying that made the series a hit on handhelds has been enhanced with motion controls and what might be the best 2-D animation we've ever seen in a game.

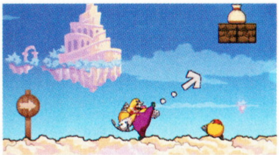
The gist of the game's story is this: the Shake King, an evil pirate, has taken over the Shake Dimension and kidnapped the good Queen Merelda and a bunch of her cute 'n' tiny friends called Merfles. A fetching female pirate named Captain Syrup motivates Wario to save the day by tempting him with something else the Shake King has stolen: the Bottomless Coin Sack. Much shaking, coin-collecting, and bad-guy-bashing ensues.

The game is played with just the Wii remote, which you hold horizontally. The Control Pad makes our favorite tubby tightwad waddle along, wiggle down pipes, crawl, and labor up ladders, while the 1 Button triggers his shoulder charge and the 2 Button makes him jump. Pressing down while in the air results in a butt stomp, and shaking the remote triggers a screen-rattling, enemy-flipping ground pound. Flipped enemies, along with items and money bags, can be picked up and shaken for loot or thrown in any direction by tilting the remote to adjust Wario's aim. The motion controls are fun to use, and they never feel overdone or tacked on.

Each of the game's five areas contains four stages plus a boss level. The goal of each stage is to find and free an imprisoned Merfle and then beat a time limit to escape, all while collecting as much treasure as possible. Each stage offers multiple bonus challenges for players willing to take on tougher tasks to bask in the glory of 100% completion, and between stages you can pop into a shop and use Wario's hard-earned cash to unlock new areas and pump up his life meter or to buy bonus items like music tracks and life-replenishing recovery potions.

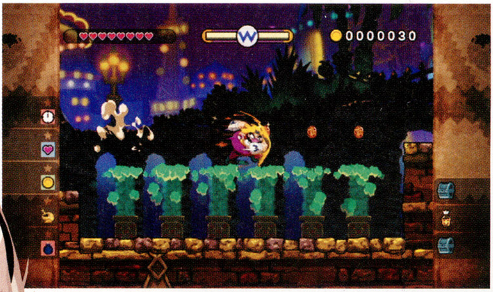
We're having a blast playing Wario Land: Shake It!—it's a great mix of old- and new-school gaming that satisfies our retro appetite without sacrificing today's advanced graphics and controls. We're eager to venture further into the Shake Dimension in the weeks ahead, so look for another report in these pages soon. —**CHRIS SL.**

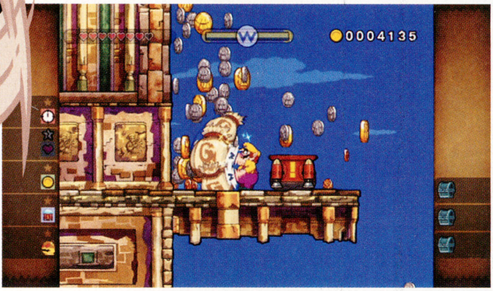


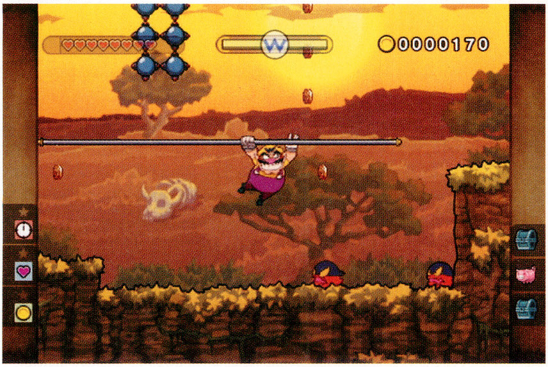


Once Wario picks up a dazed enemy, he can throw the scoundrel in any direction—the player simply tilts the Wii remote to aim.

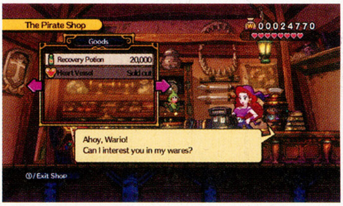
Shake Dimension, tremble before your new king!



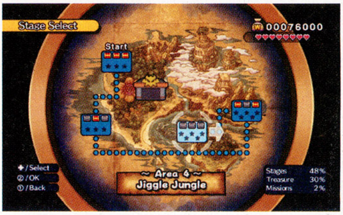




In addition to shaking the Wii remote to empty money bags and pound the ground, and tilting it to aim thrown enemies, certain situations call for specialized motion controls. Wario can swing on bars, steer a submarine, ride a unicycle across a tightrope, jet around in the sky, and more.


The Pirate Shop
00024770
Goods
Recovery Potion 20,000
Heart Vessel Sold out
①/Exit Shop

Ahoy, Wario!
Can I interest you in my wares?


Stage Select
00076000
Start
✚/Select
②/OK
①/Back
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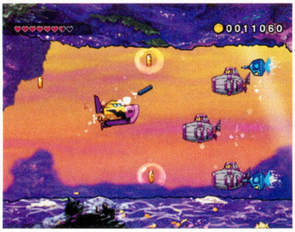
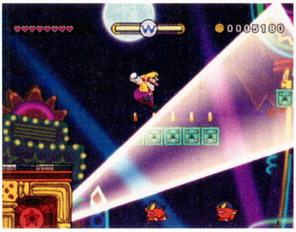
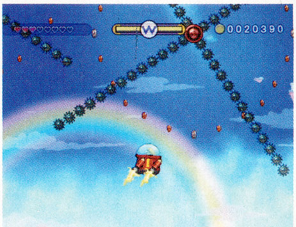
Jiggle Jungle
Stages 48%
Treasure 30%
Missions 2%







Webb of Mystery

>AWAY: SHUFFLE DUNGEON

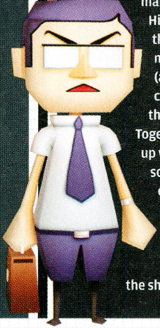
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **MISTWALKER/AQ INTERACTIVE**
RELEASE: **DECEMBER 2008**

Every year or so in Webb Village, someone disappears without a trace. No one knows how or why; they know only that 99 people have been caught by the "Away," and that they're due for the big 100. Like all of his neighbors, a young warrior by the name of Sword lives in fear of the Away, but when it strikes next, it doesn't take him—it takes the entire rest of the village.

Fortunately, Sword has figured out a way to get the town back, one villager at a time. By examining objects left by the victims, he can open portals to the mysterious shuffle dungeons where the villagers are trapped. Think of the shuffle dungeons as being composed of two reels from a slot machine, one on each screen of the Nintendo DS. Sword can walk freely between the screens, but every few seconds one or the other will shuffle, spinning around to reveal a new room where Sword can battle foes, loot treasure, and flip switches for the handful of seconds before that room too is shuffled away. You'll need to think on your feet to puzzle your way out of each dungeon, using your limited time between shuffles to open paths, clear away traps, and collect needed tools in anticipation of the shuffle that reveals the stairway to the next floor.

Sword's adventure is a strange one, but he won't have to go it alone. He'll find mysterious creatures that he dubs Fubongs, which can be used to cast magic spells of various elemental types. The villagers will also pitch in once they've been rescued, rebuilding their shops and establishing Fubong ranches to aid Sword in his quest. Sword can return the favor by finding the materials the villagers need on his dungeon forays, allowing them to expand their businesses.

The folks behind Away: Shuffle Dungeon have an impressive pedigree when it comes to making games. Away was produced by Hironobu Sakaguchi, the creator of the Final Fantasy series, with original music composed by Nobuo Uematsu (also of Final Fantasy fame) and character designs by Naoto Oshima, the artist behind Sonic the Hedgehog. Together, they've managed to come up with something that doesn't look, sound, or feel like anything that any of them have ever done before. The question is, will their combined fame lure RPG fans to this fast-paced, gimmick-driven action-RPG, or will Away end up getting lost in the shuffle? —**CASEY L.**



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1181
Fang Pod
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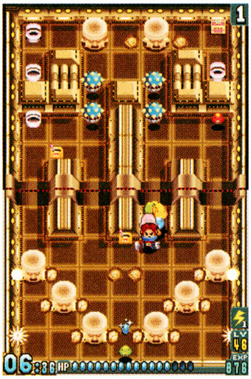
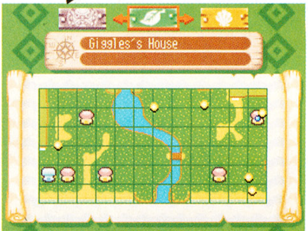
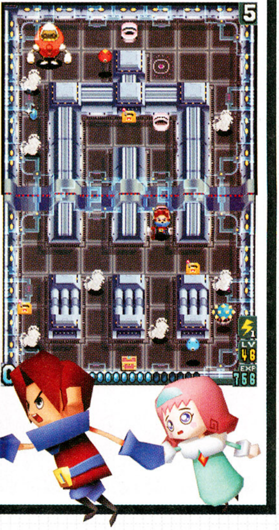
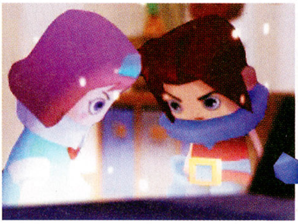






[Below] The friendship between Sword and Anella is crucial to the game's story. Anella's sacrifice allows Sword to survive the "Away."

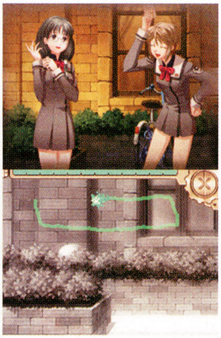


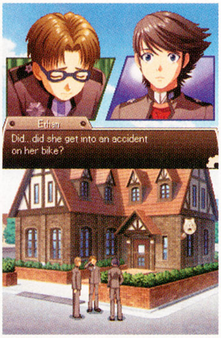
Revisionist History

> TIME HOLLOW

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **KONAMI** • RELEASE: **FALL 2008**

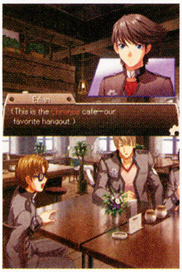
Ethan Kairos seems like a normal high-school kid. He's got friends, a pet kitten, and a loving family. But everything changes on his 17th birthday—he wakes up in a cold sweat after dreaming that his parents were trapped in a burning building, only to discover that his home is different, he lives with his uncle, and that his parents have been missing for 12 years. In addition, his head is filled with fragmented memories he never had before, and he finds a mysterious object called a Hollow Pen. By using the touch screen to investigate objects, talk to people, obtain items, and navigate the environment, you'll help Ethan re-form his missing memories, which in turn lets you use the Hollow Pen at select locations to carve a hole in time (by drawing on the touch screen) and have limited interactions with the past. Altering the past, however, can have unintended consequences, and it's up to you to solve the mystery surrounding your parents without rewriting history even further. To make matters worse, someone else seems to be causing the past to go awry—people go missing, acquaintances die, and friends become killers. Intrigue abounds in this very unique point-and-click adventure. —**CHRIS H.**





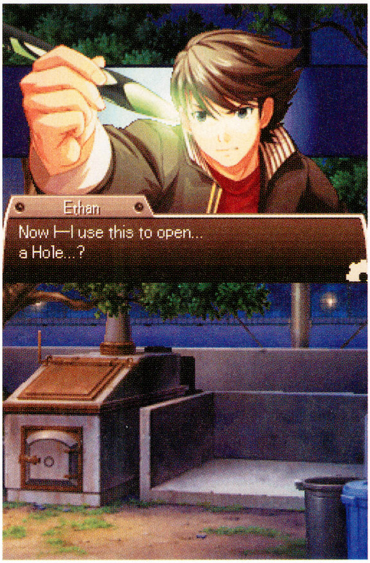
Ethan

Did...did she get into an accident on her bike?



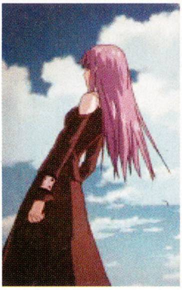
Ethan

(This is the Chronos cafe—our favorite hangout.)



Ethan

Now I—I use this to open... a Hole...?



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Boarder Patrol

>SKATE IT

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA BLACK BOX** • RELEASE: **FALL 2008**

After years without any real innovation, Tony Hawk found himself skating all by his lonesome inside one large, mossy pool. And it left the door open for the unthinkable: specifically, for EA Black Box to fly in on four wheels and dethrone the reigning king of the asphalt, reinventing video game skateboarding on PS3 and Xbox 360.

Now the Black Box team is looking to do the same thing on Wii. Skate It uses a variety of control schemes as metaphors for riding a skateboard: a Wii-remote-and-nunchuk combo, a Wii-remote-sans-nunchuk scheme, and Wii Balance Board options with or without the Wii remote. It takes a few minutes to grasp, but once you're onboard (so to speak), both Wii remote- and Balance Board-centric schemes work quite well.

First let's talk about the non-Balance Board controls: ollies, nollies, and manuals are pulled off with simple flicks and tilts of the Wii remote, while steering is controlled by either rolling the remote in either direction or using the analog stick on the nunchuk. If you imagine the remote as a fingerboard, you're on the right track: the unit is essentially a stand-in for the board, and various gestures you make with it translate into various kick tricks and combos. Grinding is handled automatically (assuming you hit your mark), and grabs are pulled off via the B Button.

Balance Board controls take a bit more time to get a feel for (as one Black Box developer said, "It's like learning to play video games with your feet—it's gonna take a minute!"), but within 10 minutes we were pulling off tricks that surprised even us. Because actually jumping off the board is not an option (this simply resets the unit's computation), the Black Box team was faced with the task of making you feel like you're skateboarding, even with both feet stuck to the board. You start by placing the Balance Board on the ground lengthwise, just like a real skateboard: shifting your balance left and right brings you into turns, while backward and forward tilting launches you into manuals. You pull off tricks by moving your feet between different parts of the board, and for the advanced player, these tricks can be combined with various Wii-remote gestures to create crazy midair spin combos.

Although we weren't crazy about the Balance Board calibration (leaning the board left and right to change your direction was much more difficult than we would have liked), the game still has a lot of development to go and plenty of time for polish before its release. There are even rumors that EA will release a series of custom boards designed for attachment to the Balance Board, in order to give the player a better center of gravity and tighter control.
—EVAN S.

The city was evacuated after some natural disasters, which explains why you have the whole place to yourself.

PRE VIEW SEPTEMBER '08

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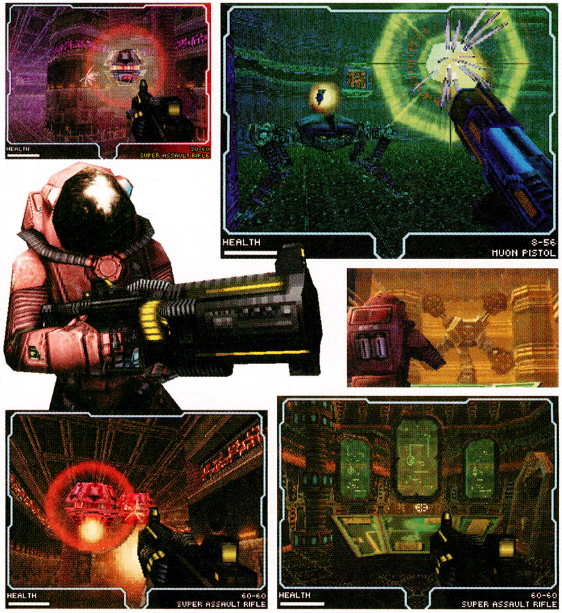
Wonder World for Wii is available at participating Blockbuster stores only. Price and availability subject to change.

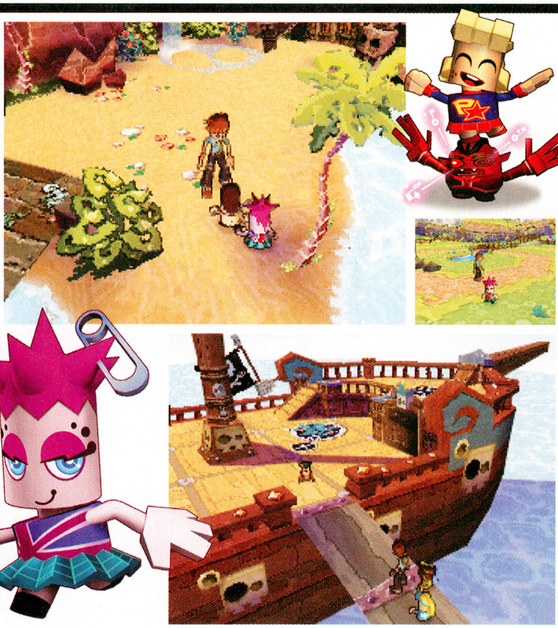
The Dark Side of the...

>MOON

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **MASTIFF**
DEVELOPER: **RENEGADE KID** • RELEASE: **FALL 2008**

It doesn't feature Samus Aran or any Metroids, but Mastiff's Moon may be the next-best thing for fans of sci-fi first-person shooters. Set in 2058, Moon puts you in the spacesuit of Major Kane, the leader of an anti-extraterrestrial unit who is investigating a mysterious facility beneath the lunar surface. Haunting music and an eerie emptiness set the stage for a dark, serious, atmospheric experience, but the calm doesn't last long—you'll soon find yourself laying waste to a wide array of alien enemies by using the touch screen to aim and either the Control Pad or buttons (for lefties) to move. Though the game is more action than adventure, there are items to use (such as a remote-controlled drone) and upgrades to obtain, and there's a decent amount of exploration—there are even vehicle segments. The developers at Renegade Kid (makers of Dementium: The Ward) promise to maintain a slick 60-frames-per-second frame-rate and include hardcore difficulty options to challenge the most skilled players. **—CHRIS H.**





Off the Beaten Path

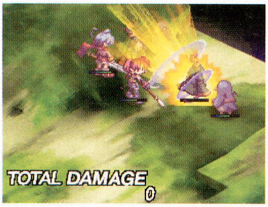
>ZUBO

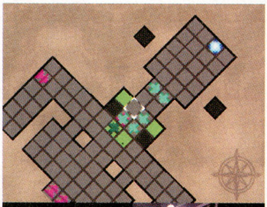
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA BRIGHT LIGHT** • RELEASE: **FALL 2008**

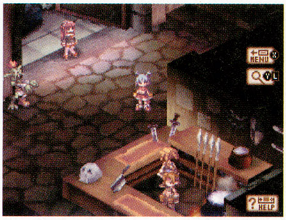
Out of nowhere, EA Bright Light has come up with one of the most promising-looking third-party DS games on the horizon: Zubo, which is also the name of the small creatures you collect (55 in all) throughout the game. They look like something Kidrobot would sell—sorta like vinyl toy meets LEGO.

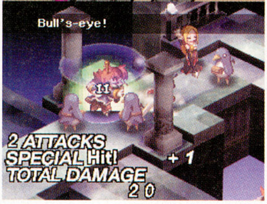
You control your movement with the stylus, running around 3-D levels with a smart camera framing the action, and dynamic lighting illuminating your path. Technically, this is one of the more ambitious games we've seen on DS. The activities are varied: in our demo we cleared some cobwebs by blowing into the DS mic and destroyed an obstacle by drawing a line of gunpowder to it.

Combat actually requires skill: once a move begins, two colored outlines appear and you tap the stylus when the outlines match up—to the rhythm of the song. If it all sounds creative and bizarre, it is: Zubo may be the best DS game you've never heard of. **—EVAN S.**









Over 9,000!

>DISGAEA DS

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **NIS AMERICA**
DEVELOPER: **NIPPON ICHI SOFTWARE**
RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2008**

Most gamers who will care about NIS's strategy-RPG opus Disgaea already know the basics about the game, but for those who don't, here goes: the story centers around Laharl, Prince of the Netherworld, who wakes up after a two year "nap" to discover his father is dead, and embarks on a quest to claim his title as king. The original game (Disgaea: Hour of Darkness for PlayStation 2) is known for throwing traditional RPG conventions such as level and damage limits out the window (you can level up all the way to 9999!), and its memorable characters and excellent localization have endeared it to fans. The upcoming DS port retains everything from the original, including the voice track, and even if you played Hour of Darkness, Disgaea DS is still well worth your time. Apart from some stylus support and added data on the upper screen, Disgaea DS adds secret characters and an entirely new storyline that centers on Laharl's vassal, Etna. The game also takes advantage of the DS's wireless capabilities, allowing you to face off against friends via local multiplayer. Look for it to hit stores later this year. **—TOM H.**

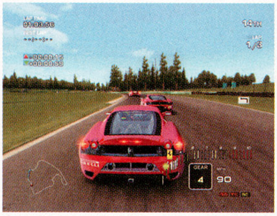
Italian Stallion

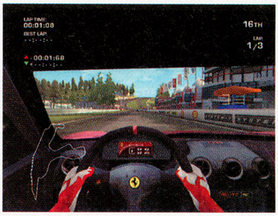
>FERRARI CHALLENGE: TROFEO PIRELLI

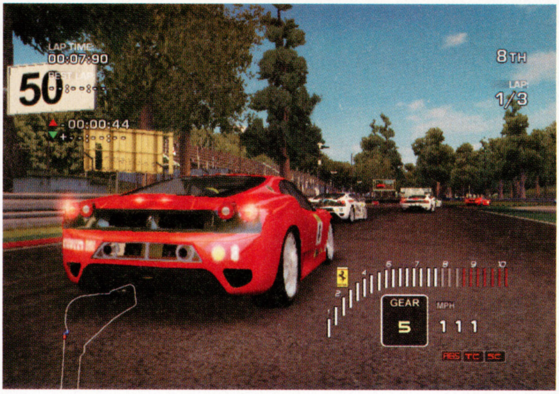
PLATFORM: **Wii (ALSO ON DS)** • PUBLISHER: **SYSTEM 3**
DEVELOPER: **EUTECHNYX** • RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2008**

Unless you're a Nintendo Power Platinum subscriber, chances are you don't drive a Ferrari. But that's what video games are for—to let us enjoy the things we'd like to do in real life, but can't (like jumping on turtles). Enter Ferrari Challenge for Wii, which lets you get behind the wheel of the most revered vehicles from throughout the Italian automaker's 60-year history, including its latest masterpiece, the F430. After customizing your ride as you see fit, you can take it for a quick race on one of the game's 16 licensed tracks, or compete in the multicircuit Ferrari Challenge series.

We recently had a chance to go hands-on with the game, and our intial test-drive was very encouraging. Handling felt spot-on (you have the option for either motion or analog-stick controls), and the visuals impressed while moving at a consistant 30 frames per second. Plus, lots of different assistance options make the game accessible for players of all skill levels. Quality racing sims aren't exactly in abundance on Wii , but Ferrari Challenge looks like it could fill the void rather nicely. **—STEVE T.**







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Wholly Brick Batman!

>LEGO BATMAN: THE VIDEOGAME

PLATFORM: **DS (ALSO ON Wii)** • PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE** • DEVELOPER: **TRAVELLER'S TALES**
RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2008**

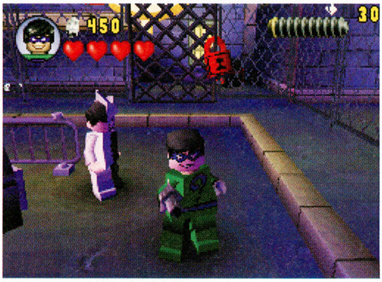
PREVIEW SEPTEMBER '0

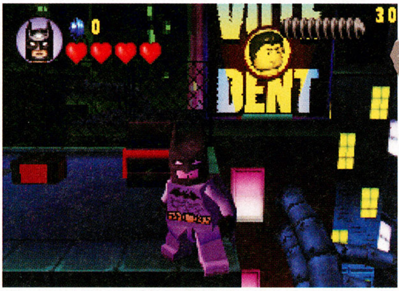
Batman is a brooding character whose raison d'être is to clean up the streets of Gotham City by striking fear into "superstitious, cowardly" criminals. So he's the ideal candidate for LEGO-ization, right? Actually, yes, because in addition to being a sourpuss, he has a family of supporting characters and a colorful gallery of foes—both of which are perfect for a LEGO video game. You've got plenty of characters to play with: Batman, Robin, Nightwing, Commissioner Gordon, The Joker, Catwoman, Two-Face, Clayface, etc.—pretty much all of the major Batman characters are included. But why would Batman team up with his villains, you ask? The answer is that he wouldn't, which is why there are two parallel stories in LEGO Batman: you can either fight for truth and justice, or wreak havoc in Gotham.

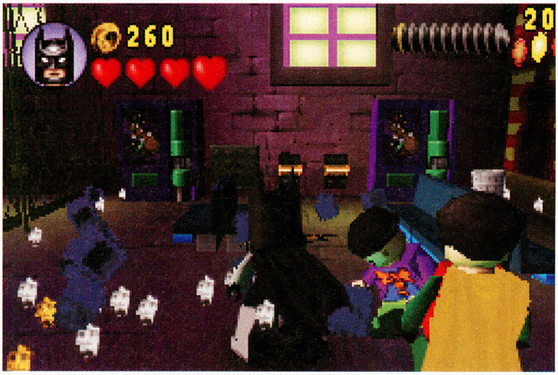
Both sides play about the same—if you've tried LEGO Star Wars or LEGO Indiana Jones, you know what to expect. In case you haven't, here's the basic breakdown: you and an ally—either CPU- or human-controlled (via local wireless)—wander around and try to destroy as many objects as you can, collecting LEGO studs, finding LEGO blocks, and building structures that allow you to progress. There's some combat, too—for example, Batman uses Batarangs to dispatch thugs and supervillains. Additionally, each character has a unique ability that you'll use to progress through the level. Two-Face has bombs that destroy certain objects, for instance, and Clayface has super strength. Batman, too, has a unique tool—a grappling hook—but he's at a disadvantage in the explosives department. That's where Batman's different suits come into play: he can step onto a costume pad and put on a Demolition Suit, which gives him the ability to throw bombs. The Caped Crusader has other suits, of course, and Robin gets some suits of his own (for instance, a Magnetic Suit he can use to walk up certain metallic walls).

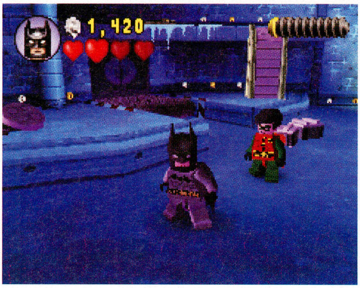
It's not all just walking in Gotham, however: we got behind the wheel of the Batmobile in a top-down level that uses both of the DS's screens so you can look further ahead and keep an eye out for road hazards and enemy vehicles. (There will be Batboat and Batwing levels, too, and the villains will have their own vehicles; we're hoping the Jokermobile makes an appearance.) Danny Elfman's *Batman* score (from the 1989 film) serves as the soundtrack for the game—it's great driving music as you race around the city.

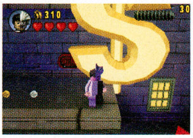
Naturally, there's a Wii version on the way as well. Check back here for more info—same bat time, same bat channel. **—JUSTIN C.**









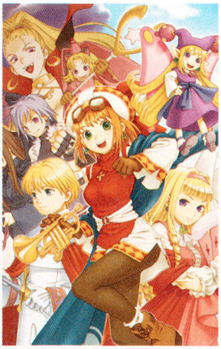


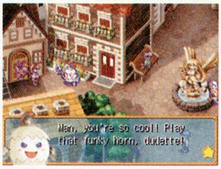
Let Them Eat Cake

>RHAPSODY: A MUSICAL ADVENTURE

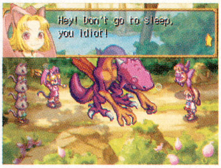
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **NIS AMERICA**
DEVELOPER: **NIPPON ICHI SOFTWARE**
RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2008**

You may not have heard of Rhapsody: A Musical Adventure before. It's not surprising—there were a lot of higher-profile releases when the original PlayStation game hit store shelves in 2000. But now NIS America is giving you a second chance to play this ultracutesy game about Cornet and her puppet friends' quest to rescue the petrified Prince Ferdinand—and it's even more user-friendly and portable than before. Unlike the strategy-RPG-esque original, this new version plays like a traditional RPG, with your party on one side and your enemies on the other. The gameplay is more streamlined, and it's now stylus-controlled, too: tap on the command you want, then tap on whoever's on the receiving end. Easy as pie—or Cake, which is one of the attacks in the game. If you use Cornet's magic horn in battle, you'll fill up the Kansha Gauge. Once you've accumulated Kansha points, you can use Cornet's special attacks, such as the aforementioned Cake (which makes giant pieces of cake fall from the sky to crush your foes). **—JUSTIN C.**

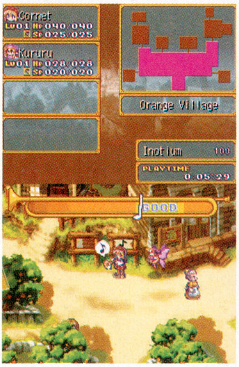


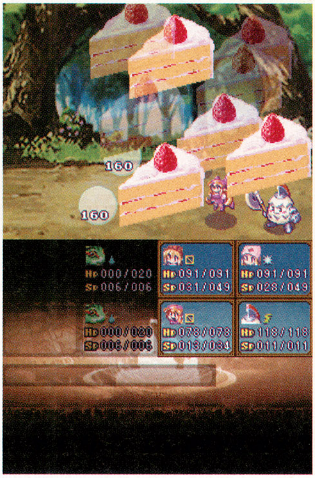


Wan, you're so cool! Play that funky horn, dudette!



Hey! Don't go to sleep, you idiot!


Cornet
Lv01 HP 040/040
SP 025/025
Kururu
Lv01 HP 028/028
SP 020/020
Orange Village
Inotium 100
PLAYTIME 0:05:29
GOOD


160
160
HP 000/020
SP 006/006
HP 091/091
SP 031/049
HP 091/091
SP 028/049
HP 000/020
SP 006/006
HP 078/078
SP 013/034
HP 118/118
SP 011/011

Cake is delicious, but it can be deadly—to enemies, at least—when giant pieces of it come crashing down. Evidently, you can have too much of a good thing.

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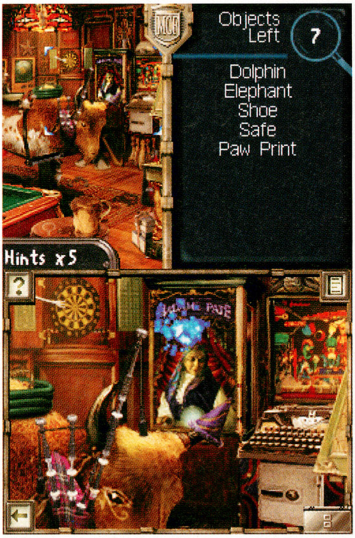
Look Sharp

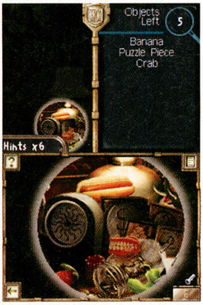
>MYSTERY CASE FILES: MILLIONHEIR

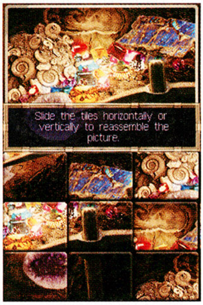
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **BIG FISH GAMES/GRYPTONITE GAMES**
RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2008**

Think you've got keen observational skills? Mystery Case Files: MillionHeir gives you a chance to prove it. Despite its title, the game isn't so much about figuring out whodunit (although there is a plot about a missing rich dude) as it is about carefully scanning your environment to find seemingly random objects hidden amidst the background. In one area you might need to find a flag, a drum, a soccer ball, and a corn dog; in another you might be looking for a straw hat, a penny, and a praying mantis. It's a little odd, but the objects are cleverly hidden, and you get tools to further your investigation. You'll tap some areas to zoom in for a closer look, interact with certain items to make them fit the required description, and use a flashlight or an X-ray machine to locate hidden objects. There are also a number of other puzzles (sliding tiles, interacting with doodles, spotting differences between two scenes) to add some variety. Even after you solve the mystery, quick play and multiplayer modes will keep you hunting. **—CHRIS H.**



[Above] Now this is what we call a rec room! You've got your pinball machine, your dart board, and your bull that's wearing a hat and apparently playing bagpipes. But maybe someone should try cleaning up once in a while....





Slide the tiles horizontally or vertically to reassemble the picture.

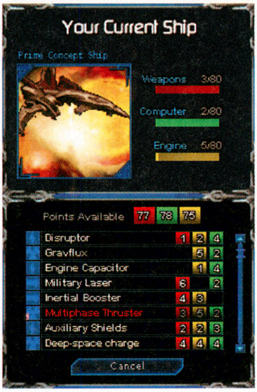
Spacial Reasoning

>PUZZLE QUEST: GALACTRIX

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **D3PA**
DEVELOPER: **INFINITE INTERACTIVE** • RELEASE: **FALL 2008**

Puzzle Quest fans will be trading their swords for blasters this fall as the addictive puzzle-RPG returns with an all-new sci-fi setting. As commander of your own ship, you'll explore a galaxy rife with unfriendly types and engage enemy vessels via puzzle battles. The basic mechanics are again reminiscent of Bejeweled, but this time the puzzle board is hexagonal, and a gravity system means that new pieces can appear from any direction. If you create a match by moving a piece to the northeast, for instance, new pieces will come in from that same direction to fill the gap. It's a bit difficult to wrap your head around at first, but these gravitational considerations ultimately add another layer of strategy to the combat.

Of course, you'll be able to customize your ship with more than 100 items, as well as hire crew members that offer myriad abilities. To fund your voyages, you can mine asteroids for commodities, then trade them to different star systems where prices are affected by the dominant faction. **—STEVE T.**

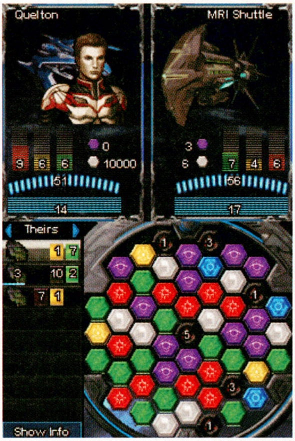


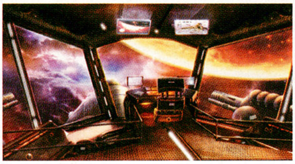
Your Current Ship

Prime Concept Ship

Weapons 3/80
Computer 2/80
Engine 5/80

Points Available	77	78	75
Disruptor	1	2	4
Gravflux		5	2
Engine Capacitor		1	4
Military Laser	6		2
Inertial Booster	4	3	
Multiphase Thruster	3	5	2
Auxiliary Shields	2	2	3
Deep-space charge	4	4	4





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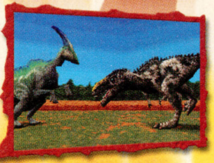

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SONIC UNSHEATHED

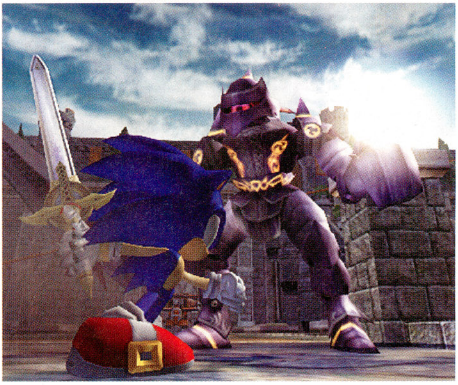
Sega's fleet-footed hedgehog forges a new path and clashes with royalty in Sonic and the Black Knight*, exclusively on Wii.*

Sonic certainly is a busy hedgehog these days. He's already slated to make his RPG debut in September's Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood for DS, followed by Wii platforming romp Sonic Unleashed in November. But never one to rest on his laurels, the Blue Blur is also revving up for next year, when he'll get medieval in the Wii-exclusive action-adventure Sonic and the Black Knight.

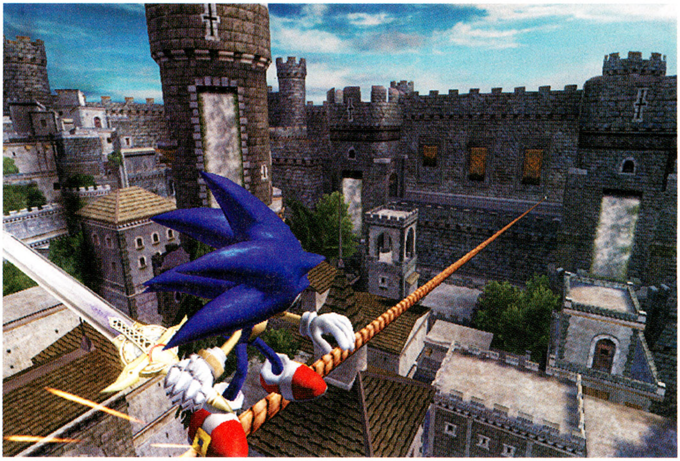
In development by many of the same folks who brought us the Arabian Nights-themed Sonic and the Secret Rings, Sonic and the Black Knight (henceforth referred to as SBK) once again thrusts our hero into a classic storybook world. This time a sorceress named Merlina summons Sonic to the mythical realm of King Arthur, but it seems the fabled monarch has somehow been corrupted and now rules the land as the tyrannical Black Knight. Naturally, it's up to Sonic to set things right, and since fleet feet alone won't end Arthur's dark reign, Sonic must take up the sword and channel his inner Lancelot.

Asked how this new twist on Sega's long-running franchise came about, first-time director Tetsu Katano recalls, "We were getting close to the release of Sonic and the Secret Rings, and [SonicTeam producer] Yojiro Ogawa asked me to start thinking about the next project. It seemed to me that we could do some interesting things with Sonic wielding a sword. Plus, the storybook device established in Sonic and the Secret Rings allowed for a lot of possibilities beyond what we were previously able to do with Sonic. So I thought that was a good way of introducing all of the new sword actions I wanted to include."

As Sonic runs along, a simple flick of the Wii remote will execute a basic slash, which is enough to dispatch most low-level grunts. But when faced with a more formidable adversary, the hedgehog can engage in advanced swordplay. His repertoire includes the ability to thrust, parry, and even pull off a devastating buzz-saw maneuver midjump. And Sonic's weapon can



BY STEVE THOMASON



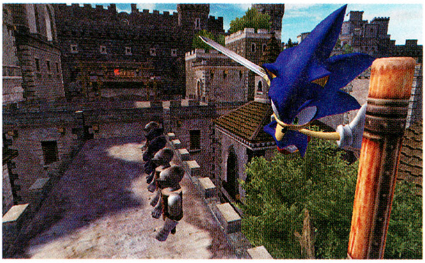
be utilized for more than just cutting down foes; during our demo, we saw the hedgehog leap from a high precipice, then thrust the blade into a wall to slow his decent, sparks flying impressively as steel cut through brick.

It's important to stress, however, that SBK remains first and foremost about speed. The swordplay is mixed in with traditional Sonic platforming, and the development team has been extremely mindful of not breaking the game's flow too often—combat is integrated in such a way that most of the time you can slice through any who stand in your path without even slowing down. "I can't remember how many different approaches we tested," says lead designer Morio Kishimoto. "We'd try something to see how it works, change it, and test it again. Usually you have something that you can use as a reference, but with this game we're combining swordplay with Sonic's trademark high-speed action, which is just very different. There's no model that we can look to. That's why we've committed to building so many prototypes and trying different approaches until we get it right."

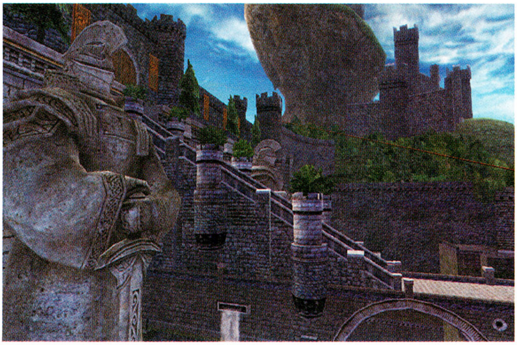
One of the big hooks in Sonic and the Secret Rings was that you would steer the hedgehog by tilting the Wii remote. But because the remote is now used to wield a sword, SBK has you maneuvering your character the old-fashioned way: via the Control Stick. "We prototyped lots of different control options," says Katano. "Due to the addition of the sword, the controls had to be different than last time. We tried many, many different schemes, and this way just seemed to work best and was the most intuitive." The director adds with a laugh, "But we haven't tried the Balance Board yet!"

A KNIGHT'S TALE

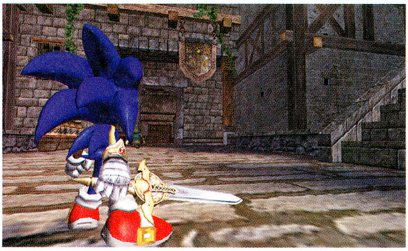
One of the team's priorities for SBK was to take greater advantage of the game's motif than did Sonic and the Secret Rings. As Kishimoto explains, "We didn't want to just add a sword to the regular Sonic formula. We wanted to come up with something new using the sword and with Sonic. So the concept of knighthood and what it means to be a knight will be an important element of the game."

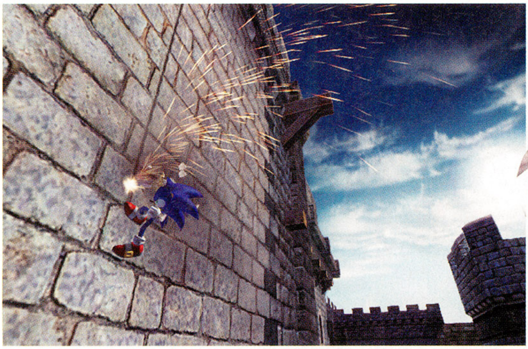


Our hero begins his quest as a mere knave. Only by becoming a full-fledged knight will he have any hope of defeating King Arthur. (Plus, Sir Sonic has a nice ring to it.) Since the finger-wagging hedgehog isn't exactly known for being chivalrous, his sword—a talking blade named Calibur—serves as a mentor on the ways of the round table. Of course, the most important of a knight's virtues is devotion to helping others, and throughout each stage, you can find civilian townsfolk in need of assistance. Should you lend your services—rescuing some poor soul from wrongful imprisonment, for instance—you'll earn points toward knighthood. If, on the other hand, you inadvertently smite one of these innocent bystanders, your reputation will take a hit. (And if you do it on purpose, you're just a jerk.) At the end of each stage, the game tallies your good—and not-so-good—deeds and updates



[Left] As you can see, the medieval setting lends itself to some impressive spectacle.





[Above] Sonic does his best Ron Popiel impersonation by demonstrating that his blade even cuts through brick!

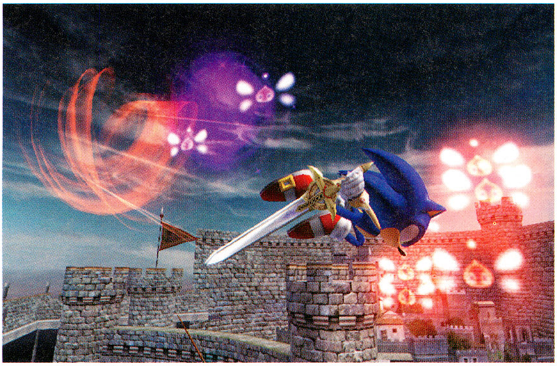
[Above] The new look of King Arthur, aka the Black Knight. We're not sure what turned him to the dark side, but we suspect it might have been that awful Clive Owen movie.

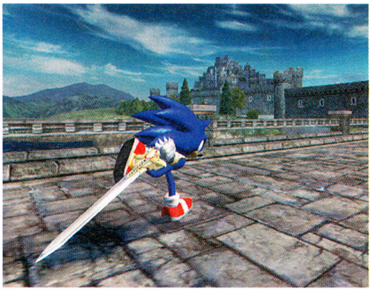
your rank accordingly.

One of the benefits to behaving in a knightly manner is the ability to purchase items from grateful residents. Sonic can acquire everything from gauntlets to magical tomes to new swords, and when equipped, each article bestows him with a unique benefit. Kishimoto estimates that the game will include about 200 items in all (some of which can also be found in hidden treasure chests), and you'll even be able to combine certain pieces of equipment to create new ones. Plus, if you have trouble tracking down a particularly elusive bauble, you'll have the option to go online and trade with friends.

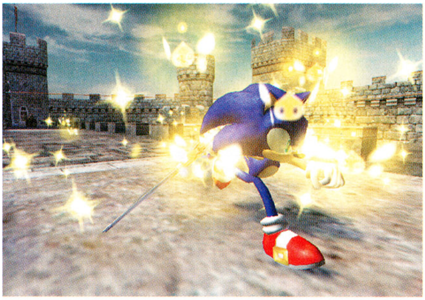
Though still early in development, SBK already looks stunning. Sonic and the Secret Rings was one of the prettiest Wii games available at the time of its release, and the team is obviously determined to raise the bar once more. The demo we saw moved silky-smoothly despite boasting some incredible draw distances, beautiful lighting, and intricately detailed surroundings. What really impressed us, though, was how traditional Sonic elements have been adapted to fit the Arthurian setting and create a more convincing aesthetic. Rings come in burlap sacks rather than computer monitors, Sonic is propelled skyward not by bounce pads but by magic elementals (which, if you look closely, resemble winged Chao heads), and there are no more floating rails to conveniently lead our hero from point A to point B—Sonic can now cross large gaps by, among other methods, firing a ballista and grinding the rope tied to the projectile. On the audio side, veteran composer Jen Senoue is taking a similar approach, injecting familiar Sonic themes with a Celtic flavor.

While it introduces a number of ideas new to the series, SBK also does some things to cater to longtime fans. Each stage contains multiple branching paths, and searching for townsfolk and treasure chests provides an element of exploration that recalls Sonic's





[Left, below] These magic elementals serve a variety of functions, depending on the color. The red ones act as spring boards, while the blue give Sonic a speed boost.



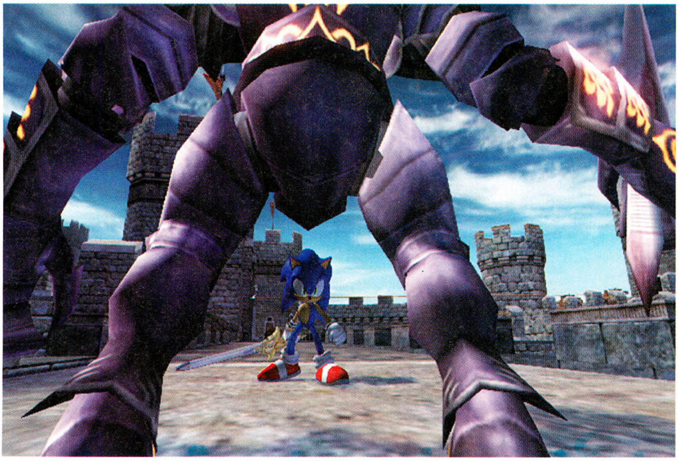
early Genesis days. Another nod to the Blue Blur's 16-bit origins: the camera will occasionally pan to a side-scrolling perspective for a quick dose of classic 2-D action (not unlike in the upcoming Sonic Unleashed).

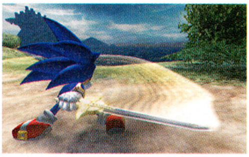
SECRET ROOTS

As for the game's connection to Sonic and the Secret Rings, it goes beyond the storybook theme. The team is also bringing back many of the gameplay concepts introduced in Sonic's Wii debut, including the skill system. Players will again earn a wide assortment of equippable power-ups, allowing them to customize the hedgehog for different situations. Based on user feedback, however, the team is looking at various ways to evolve the system. "We reviewed what didn't work with the skill system in Sonic and the Secret Rings very closely, and we're trying to resolve those problems as much as possible," says Katano. "We're being very careful not to let the skill system interfere with the game's tempo this time."

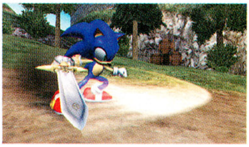
The mission structure from Sonic and the Secret Rings also returns, though the developers hope to make it less arduous as well. Each stage will still consist of multiple missions with different stipulations, but you won't have to complete as many of them to progress through the main story. "And there will be no dinosaur eggs!" promises Katano with a laugh.

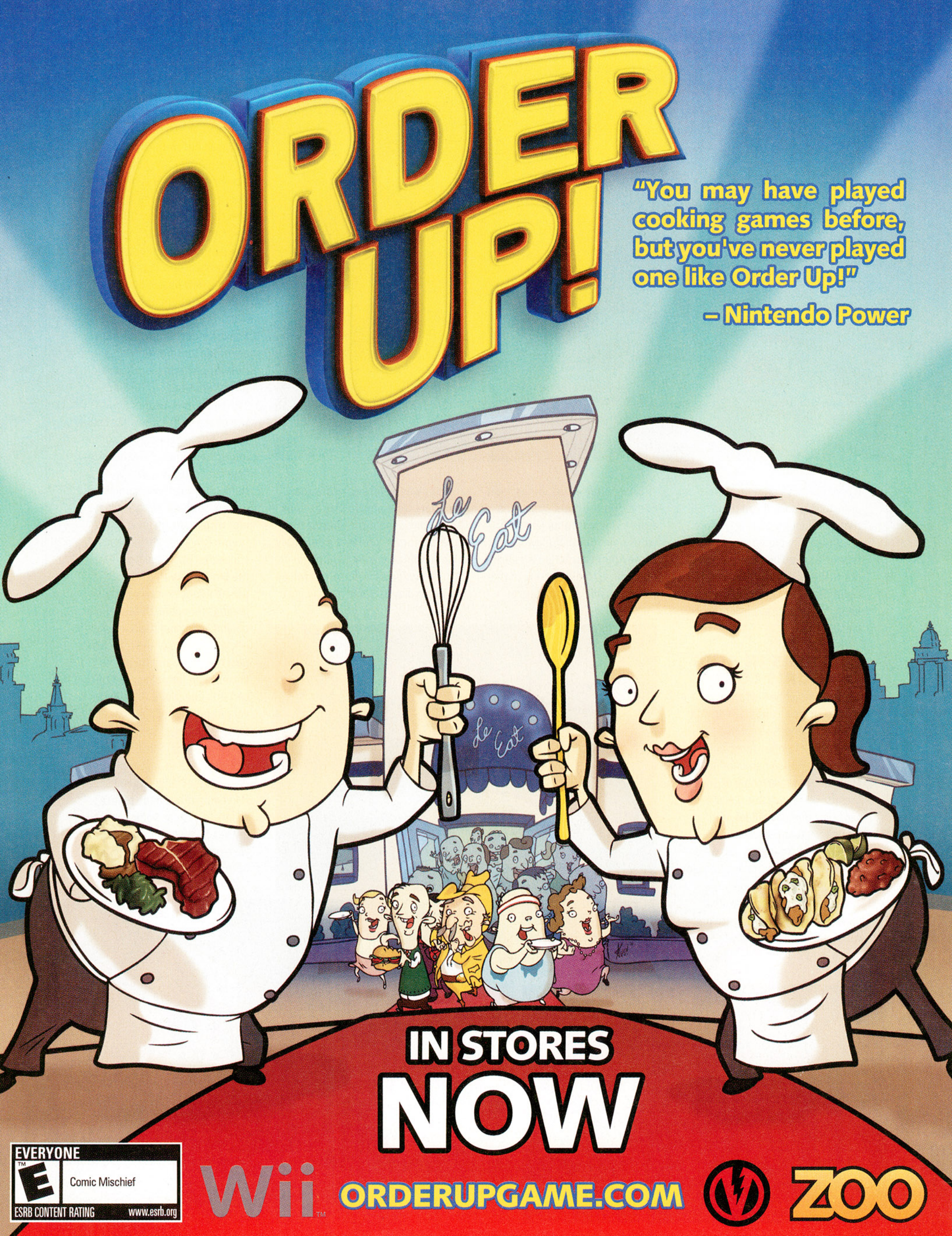
Though the last game's Soul Gauge—which gave Sonic the ability to speed up and slow down time—is no longer, our hero has an all-new (as-of-yet-unnamed) special gauge that bestows him with similarly impressive powers. The meter fills gradually whenever Sonic vanquishes an enemy or snags a purple elemental, and when it reaches a certain point you can unleash a powerful combination attack capable of tearing through multiple foes in quick succession. You simply press the B Button to lock onto the nearest enemy, flick the remote to strike him down, then press





Perhaps Sonic could be a guest fighter in the next Soulcalibur. Hey, it's less absurd than Ivy's, um...enhancements.

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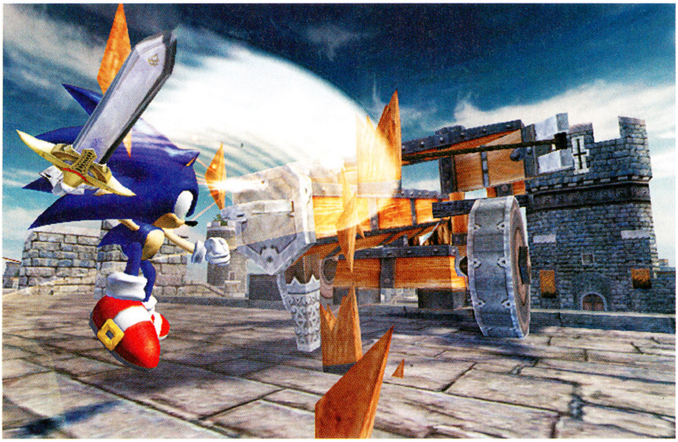


B again to move onto the next unfortunate soul. If you chain together enough smitings before the gauge is depleted, Sonic will receive a speed burst at the end of the string. It's a pretty impressive sight; if ever an anthropomorphic hedgehog could be considered badass, this is it.

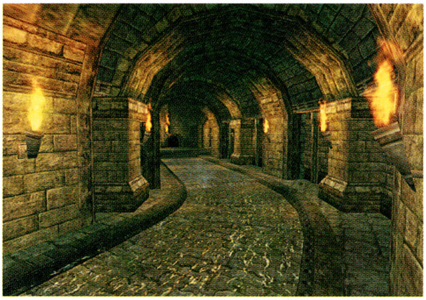
CRITTERS IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT

Just as they subbed in for such characters as Ali Baba and Aladdin in Sonic and the Secret Rings, a number of familiar faces will assume Arthurian personas in SBK. This time, however, some of Sonic's friends will be playable. Each hero will boast unique abilities, and though the team isn't ready to divulge the full cast just yet, we do know the identities of two playable comrades: Knuckles, who brandishes two swords at once, and Shadow, who we can only assume wields a magical blade forged from overwrought angst.

Now before a certain segment of dyed-in-the-wool Sonic fans start a riot in front of Sega HQ, let us point out that playing these other characters is entirely optional. "I think that one of the reasons Sonic and the Secret Rings was well-reviewed is that players were able to play as Sonic only throughout the entire game," says Katano. "And that's definitely something we want to implement in this game as well. So you will be able to play as Sonic from beginning to end if that's what you prefer. But as you progress, you'll also have the choice to switch between different characters."

Needless to say, Arthur has powerful allies of his own, and the developers promise some spectacular duels for SBK's boss encounters. "We can't go into much detail yet, unfortunately, but the swordplay presents lots of exciting new possibilities," teases Katano. "Fighting these bosses will provide quite a spectacle." The developers remain similarly coy when it comes to SBK's multiplayer elements, but Kishimoto offers a not-too-subtle hint. "When people see that Sonic is wielding a sword, they'll probably have certain expectations of the multiplayer mode," he theorizes. "And all I can say is that we're thinking along those same lines."

New Sonic games are always met with a certain level of skepticism given the franchise's checkered past, and bequeathing the Blue Blur with a weapon will no doubt exacerbate those feelings for some. But the team behind Sonic and the Black Knight is keenly aware of the franchise's past missteps, and their enthusiasm for doing right by the series is infectious. "I believe it's very important to have passion for what you do," says Katano. "It's important to love the games you work on." In case that's not enough, the hedgehog himself is keeping tabs on the team's progress. "I hear Sonic's voice in my head," reveals Kishimoto. "And we're going to keep developing until Sonic says it's a good game."



The environments are some of the best we've seen on Wii to date. Check out that water!

POWER
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2
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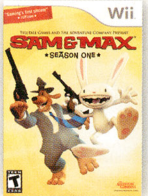

TEEN
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Cartoon Violence
Crude Humor
Mild Language
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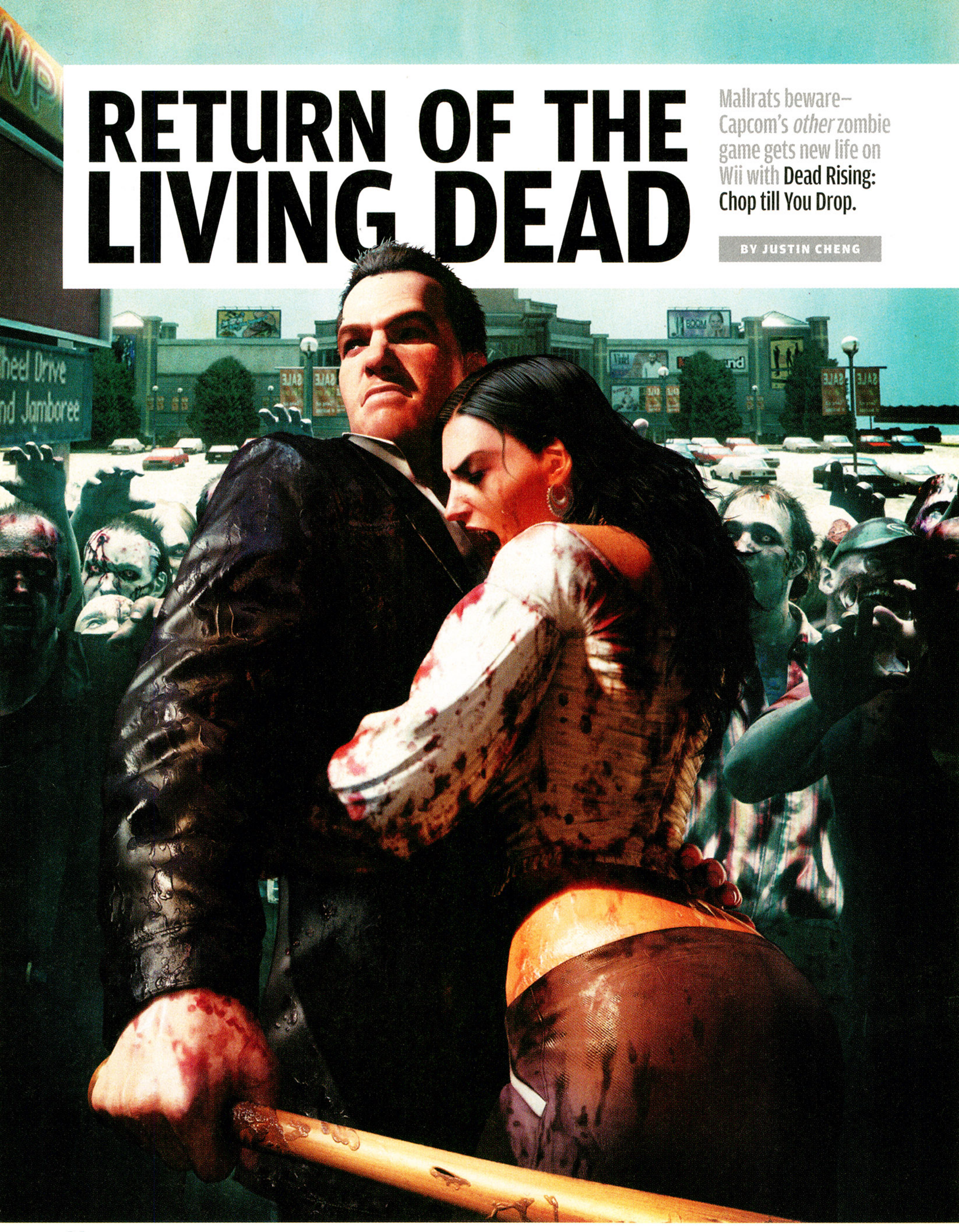
RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD

Mallrats beware—Capcom's *other* zombie game gets new life on Wii with **Dead Rising: Chop till You Drop.**

BY JUSTIN CHENG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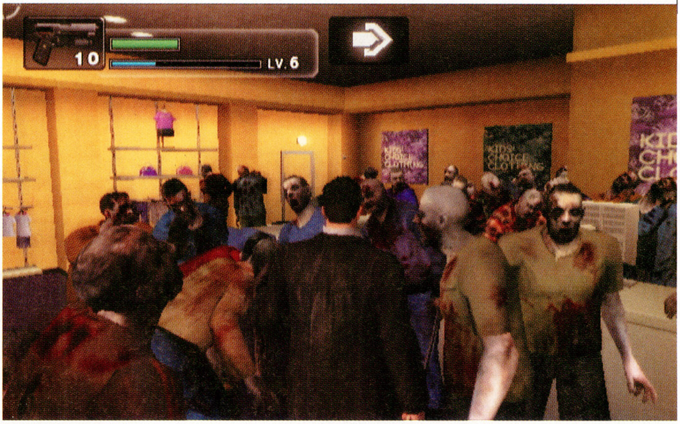
nd Jamboree
SALE

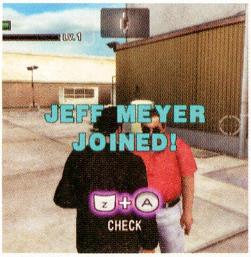
As morbid as it sounds, there's something appealing about zombies. Capcom producer Minoru Nakai offers an explanation: "Zombies are great, because they are scary and destructive, but they are also rather sad, and sort of charming as well. This is because they were once human, so they make really interesting monsters." Capcom is certainly no stranger to the living dead—its long-running, critically acclaimed Resident Evil franchise is proof positive of that—but the publisher took a slightly different, more action-heavy approach with 2006's M-rated Dead Rising.

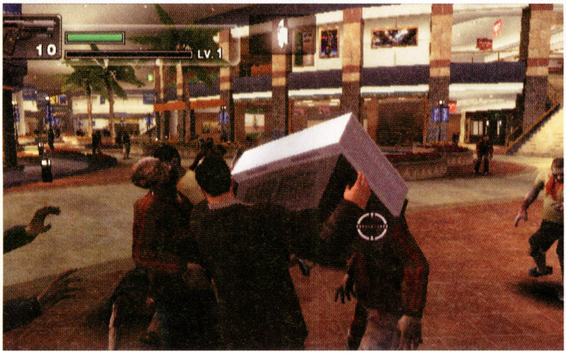
In the hit Xbox 360 game, gamers stepped into the shoes of Pulitzer-hungry photojournalist Frank West, who spends three days investigating, chronicling, and simply surviving a zombie apocalypse in Willamette Mall. The basic premise of this Wii version, Dead Rising: Chop till You Drop, is the same, retaining what made the original so compelling: "fighting through and defeating hordes of zombies by any means possible." Nakai continues, "Also, it's great fun to try and use your time wisely to accomplish all that you want to do while at the same time doing what you need to do to stay alive."

Staying alive for 72 hours until Frank's helicopter-pilot pal can pick him up will definitely be a challenge—there are hundreds of zombies milling about the shopping center. (The developers' goal is to fit more than 100 zombies onscreen at once.) Because you're in a mall, though, you have all manner of weaponry at your disposal. In addition to the firearms found at the gun shop (what mall is complete without one of those?), there are plenty of other lethal objects on hand, such as baseball bats, television sets, saw blades, and katanas, for a total of over 50 weapons in all. "There will be new weapons, but we aren't saying just yet what they will be," Nakai notes. "Also, some old weapons will have new uses this time around.... We have taken weapons that are used in the same way, for example the 2x4 and the lead pipe, and combined them into one."

Using these weapons is where you'll really see the Wii difference—and similarities to Resident Evil 4: Wii Edition. Nakai explains, "After Resident Evil 4 Wii [Edition] became such a big hit, we started thinking about what other game we could make that could take advantage of that game system." Since the two games share the same engine, the shooting mechanics feel







You've got a variety of weapons at your disposal, but one thing you won't be using is your camera: "There won't be any photography in the Wii version," states Nakai. But how else is Frank going to get his Pulitzer?

instantly familiar: when you have a projectile weapon equipped, you hold down the B Button to enter the shooting mode, then aim with the Wii remote. No problemo. But firearms consume ammo, which isn't always readily available. Then Dead Rising's signature melee combat comes into play: by pressing the A Button, you can perform a quick attack, or you can swing the remote for a stronger attack. "Use of the Wii remote control also plays a key part in making the boss battles even better," hints Nakai.

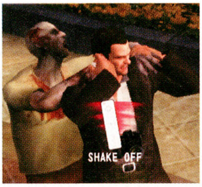
THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME

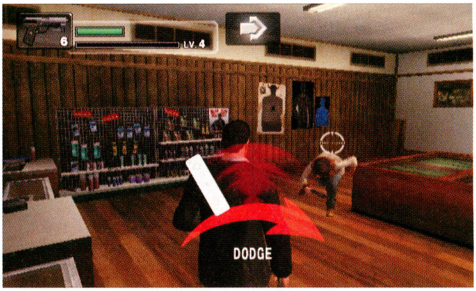
While the mall has become what Nakai calls a "zombie paradise," zombies are not the only enemies you have to worry about. It seems that some people, when faced with the horrors and anarchy of a zombie attack, become psychopaths. These game bosses will try to kill you for sport, for survival, or for no reason at all. The battles against the psychopaths were the most difficult parts in the original Dead Rising. You would think that shooting a crazed gun-store owner in the face would be enough to take him down—he's only human, after all—but not so: apparently, he's as resilient as a chemically imbalanced Tony Montana. But Nakai says, "The battle areas as well as the boss AI have been tuned to better fit the new game system." To dodge a tackle, you have to waggle the Wii remote, for instance.

In fact, much of the game has been refined to address many of the frustrations of the original. Now there's a selectable difficulty level, an improved save system that allows you to save your progress regularly over multiple save files, larger text (small text was a major issue when Dead Rising was originally released), and an episodic game structure that better differentiates main missions and sub-missions. "The configuration of sub-missions will be based on your progress through the game as well as the difficulty," Nakai tells us. "You will be able to return to previous areas after advancing to the next mission."

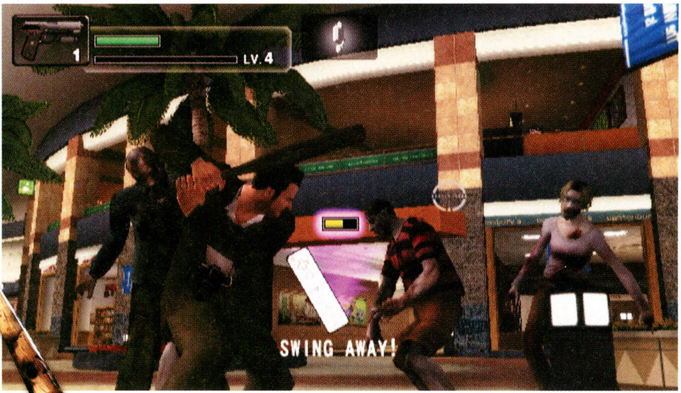
A HELPING HAND

Returning to previous areas is pretty important—other survivors





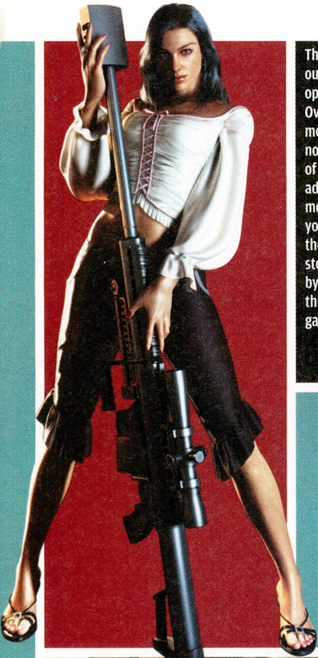
Frank's attire is perfectly fine as is, but you can change him into one of the game's 65 different outfits if you really want to look good (or goofy) while hunting zombies.

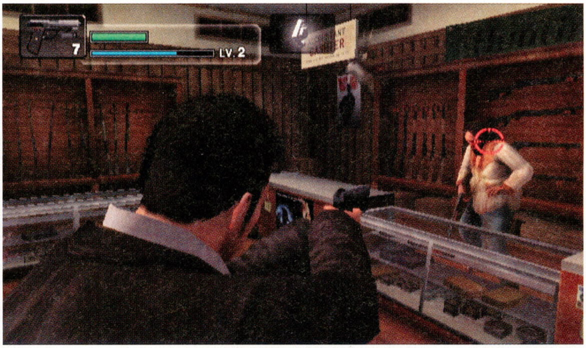


SURVIVAL TIPS

Are you prepared for a zombie apocalypse? Max Brooks's 2003 book *The Zombie Survival Guide* will certainly help you out. But Nakai has his own plans: "Well, I haven't been caught up in a real zombie apocalypse yet, but if that ever does happen, I think I'd like to go to a supermarket or some other store with a lot of food. If there was a drug store or pharmacy there as well, I'd be all set."

The new motion controls give this Dead Rising port much more interactivity. Look at that zombie fly!

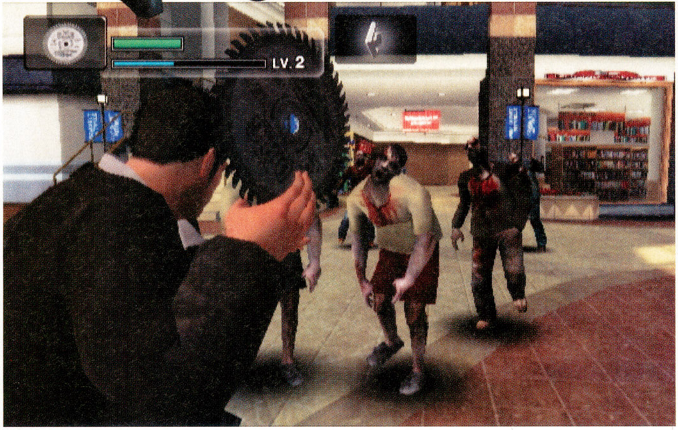




The previously optional Overtime mode is now part of the main adventure, meaning you'll get the whole story simply by playing through the game.

WILL IT BLEND?

As tasty as human flesh is (for zombies, anyway), Frank's no cannibal—fortunately, there's plenty of good old-fashioned human food in a mall. However, drinking orange juice and eating pies all the time doesn't do much other than replenish your health. That's where the blenders come in. Mix two foods together, and you'll create an elixir that will give you super powers. For example, blend the aforementioned orange juice with pie to get the Untouchable ability, which prevents zombies from grabbing you for a short amount of time. "There will be some new food combinations and new effects that go along with them," Nakai states. What the new combinations are, however, is yet another mystery to be uncovered.



Even if you don't have a power saw on hand, you can always chuck saw blades at your enemies.

are trapped or trying to find refuge in the mall, and it's up to you to rescue them. To do so, you simply press the + Button to talk to them, then press it again to swap between the Wait and Follow commands. Just be sure to protect them; they're pretty helpless without you. You don't want them to become zombie chow, do you?

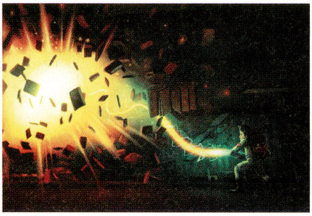
Canvassing a sprawling shopping complex for survivors can be daunting; luckily, you have some backup. The mall's janitor, Otis, uses the security cameras to watch over the mall, calling you up via your transceiver to give you advice and direct you to various points of interest, which you can spot on your map by pressing the 1 Button. (We can only hope that unlike in the original game, Otis doesn't call you at inopportune moments—such as when flesh-starved zombies are about to munch on you—so you'd have to stop chatting with him to fight for your life, only to have him chide you later for hanging up on him.) There is a pair of Homeland Security agents on the scene as well, but they seem to have an agenda that doesn't involve you. And then there's the mysterious Carlito and Isabela who—well...let's just say there's a lot to discover about those two.

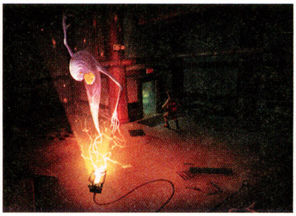
All in all, there's much more to this game than just hacking a path through a throng of zombies, as fun as that is. "I think that this is a great game for people who don't normally play horror games," Nakai says. "This game provides more thrills, surprises, and fun than a top-quality haunted house. Just be careful of zombie addiction!" We'll definitely keep that in mind when Dead Rising: Chop till You Drop is released this winter.

BUSTIN' LOOSE

We make actual, physical contact with both the Wii and DS versions of Sierra's **Ghostbusters: The Video Game.**

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN





The 1984 hit *Ghostbusters* stands the test of time as one of the greatest comedy films ever made. Virtually everybody has seen it, nearly everyone loves it, and many people know the film's heroes—Ray Stantz, Peter Venkman, Egon Spengler, and Winston Zeddemore—as if they were family. Soon you'll get to add one more name to that list: you. Players will be standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the original legendary spirit-stoppers—voiced by their original actors, Dan Aykroyd, Bill Murray, Harold Ramis, and Ernie Hudson—in a game that could be considered the third Ghostbusters film.

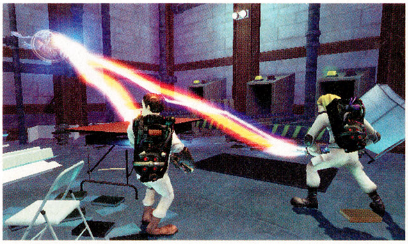
Set in 1991, the Wii version of Ghostbusters: The Video Game takes place during a boom period for the group. The gang isn't pinching their pennies like at the beginning of *Ghostbusters II*; in fact, the mayor of New York City rode to re-election on a pro-Ghostbusters platform and the team is now an officially sanctioned organization. Business is up, and the Ghostbusters are recruiting—which is where you come in. You can select whether your character is male or female (a feature not available in the PS3 or Xbox 360 versions of the game), but either way, you're the rookie of the bunch and you're gonna get to experience lots of strange somethings in the neighborhood.

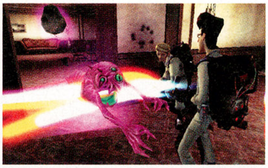
The adventure begins when a huge psycho-kinetic energy pulse rocks Manhattan. The sudden, mysterious paranormal event riles up all the local ghosts, including Slimer; the event causes him to break out of his confinement chamber in the Ghostbusters' firehouse HQ and return to his old haunting grounds: the 12th floor of the Sedgewick Hotel. It's here where you'll learn the ropes and familiarize yourself with the game's controls as you convince Slimer to settle down.

NICE SHOOTIN', TEX!

As you'd expect, you move your character with the nunchuk's Control Stick, and the Wii remote acts as your Neutrona Wand. By pointing at the screen you move the targeting cursor, and by aiming at the edge of the screen you can rotate the camera (or if you don't want to move the camera, you can hold down the C Button to enter strafing mode). Pressing the B Button fires the blast stream out of the unlicensed nuclear accelerator on your back, and just like in the movies, it does more than just zap ghosts—it sears walls, smashes furniture, and knocks books off of bookcases. Don't worry; since you have the full support of the city, they pay the bill (much to the chagrin of your government liaison, Walter Peck, who's once again played by William Atherton).

Mostly, however, your blast stream sends spooks and specters back to the dimension from which they came. Corporeal ghosts (ones with physical form) can simply be blasted back to the afterlife, but ethereal ones, such as Slimer and his ilk, require a more delicate touch. After wearing down a ghost



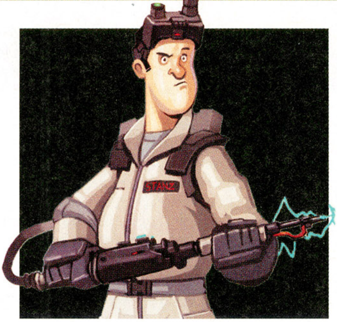


Bustin' ghosts is tough work; luckily, your fellow Ghostbusters are often nearby to help. Just don't cross the streams.

INTERVIEW **DAN AYKROYD**

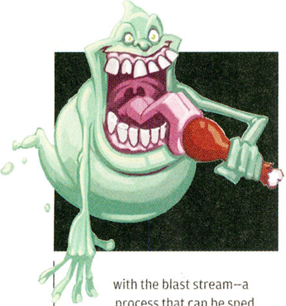
THE HEART OF THE GHOSTBUSTERS

Actor/comedian Dan Aykroyd has been essential to the success of Ghostbusters. Not only did he star as Ghostbuster Ray Stantz, but he cowrote both movies with Harold Ramis (Egon Spengler). For Ghostbusters: The Video Game, Aykroyd returns to the property in a big way, reprising his role as both actor and writer. Nintendo Power had the opportunity to speak to Aykroyd about his encore performance.



NINTENDO POWER What made you interested in being an integral part of the Ghostbusters game project?

DAN AYKROYD I think it started with the real affection and passion that the gamers and the programmers at Sierra have for the material and for the old movies that they grew up as kids watching.... They really nailed what essentially could be taken as the third movie. I just thought what they did was really outstanding, so they gave me the 300-page script, I sat down, and I rewrote it just to kind of reconform it to the sound and tone of how we would speak in the old language, the old vernacular and all that. And then we worked together on the voice and it was just a very satisfying collaboration all the way around.



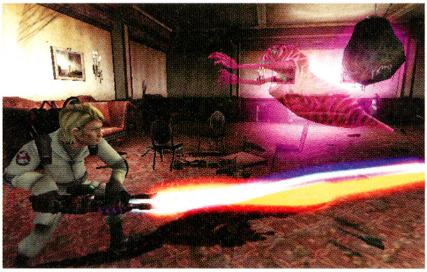
with the blast stream—a process that can be sped up by pressing A to fire a projectile called a Boson Dart, although that can make your equipment overheat—you shake the nunchuk to surround the ghost with a "wrangle cage" of energy, allowing you to move the entity around the room. Sometimes the ghosts put up more of a struggle, requiring you to flick the remote to slam them to the ground. Once you've got a ghost under control, you hold a button (which one has yet to be determined) and make a tossing motion with the nunchuk to throw out one of the Ghostbusters' famous containment traps; all that's left is to drag the spirit into the beam emanating from the trap, and your ghost is bagged and tagged.

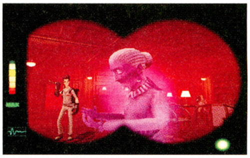
HE SLIMED ME

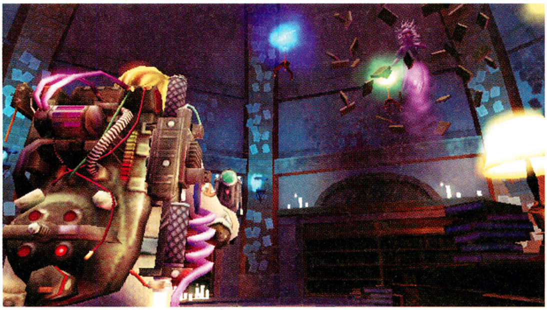
That's not to say that catching ghosts is easy—phantasms can slime you to slow down your movement, requiring you to shake the nunchuk to cleanse yourself of the viscous substance, and sometimes you'll need the help of your fellow Ghostbusters to take down a ghost. Ray, Peter, Egon, and Winston are often at your side, yelling quips, cautions ("Stay alert! Animators can hide in anything!"), instructions, and tips on where a ghost might emerge. If your health gets drained and there's another Ghostbuster nearby, he can revive you, and, likewise, if one of your comrades goes down you can revive him. The same holds true for you and a real-life partner if you're playing the game in split-screen co-op mode.

After you've retrieved Slimer from the hotel, you'll find yourself at another familiar Ghostbusters locale: the New York Public Library. The haunting going on at the beginning of the first film was nothing compared to what's happening now—apparitions are causing books to fly around like bats, and elementals are manifesting as Book Centurions, which are equipped with shields that you must wrangle away before you can defeat them.

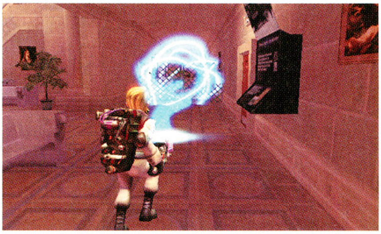
The area also provides a good excuse for trying out some of your new ghostbusting gear—after all, you're the Ghostbusters' experimental-equipment







You can use your blast stream for more than just zapping ghosts—it also lets you interact with anything that gets covered in ectoplasm, such as the gate shown below.



INTERVIEW DAN AYKROYD

What are your thoughts on video games in general as a storytelling medium, and is it something you'd consider doing more of in the future?
I like 'em! I've got a couple of screenplays that I haven't been able to get made as movies and I'm definitely going to propose them [as games] because they're both science-fiction pieces and they're great.... I think that you can, for a lot less, execute great stories and great premises in the gaming world, and—depending, of course, on how the Ghostbusters game does—I'm interested in being more involved in this medium, definitely. I've got lots of stories—stories as good as *Spies Like Us* or *Ghostbusters* or *Blues Brothers* or any of the other films that I wrote.

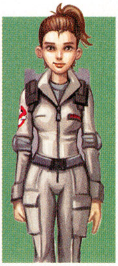
Are any of the story elements in the game originally ideas that you had considered for a third Ghostbusters movie, or were any unused ideas from the original two movies?
Absolutely, yes. The exploitation of Manhattan's subterranean and perhaps unknown architecture—the aspect of the mystic connection to buildings exists not only in the 55 Central Park West building, which was in the movie, but also in other structures throughout the city. The concept that there are inter-dimensional portals at different points if you know how to pressure them...and just the concept of taking Manhattan and making it more of a character than it was in the first two movies.

Did your approach to writing for a game differ from writing for a movie?
Well, [the writers at Sierra] had pretty much laid out the structure for what they were capable of doing. There was no major structural or major character work really needed because they had such a great feel. Other than a couple of passes on dialogue and then, of course, when we were recording my audio I added a few things there, but structurally they pretty well had it from the beginning.

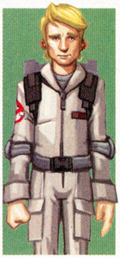
Speaking of the dialogue recording, what was it like for you to get back into the Ray Stantz character again after so many years?
The first thing I did was I sat down and watched

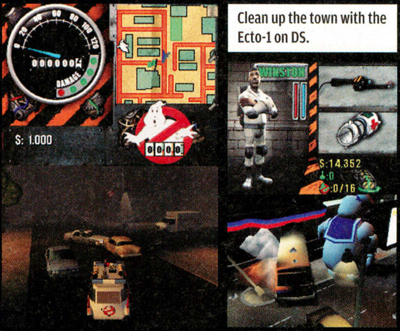
technician. Pressing right on the remote's Control Pad switches to the Dark Matter Generator, which allows you to freeze enemies with a Stasis Beam and fire a powerful short-range burst called a Shock Blast. Pressing left lets you use the Plasm Distribution System, which is used for blowing self-regenerating ectoplasm out of the Slime Blower Mark II (handy for negating nasty black slime that's otherwise impervious to your blast stream) and dropping slime mines. The PKE (psycho-kinetic energy) meter is another indispensable tool. After you equip it by pressing up, it functions just like in the movie—the closer you are to supernatural activity, the higher the arms raise to indicate a high level of psychokinetic energy.

Additionally, you can press up twice to equip the Paragoggles, which let you see ethereal objects and parts of the environment that are invisible to the naked eye. When you're pursuing a ghost through the stacks in the library, for example, the shelves keep moving, essentially trapping you in a maze; at one point you have to equip the goggles to see phantom bookshelves that block your path. Eventually you'll make your way to an underground cavern beneath



[Right] On Wii, you can choose whether your hero is male or female. In co-op mode both rookies will participate.





Clean up the town with the Ecto-1 on DS.

GHOSTBUSTERS ON THE GO

The console version of Ghostbusters might be getting most of the attention, but the DS isn't being left out. While the general story and locales are the same as in the Wii game, there are some major differences—for instance, instead of playing as a rookie, you play as the original Ghostbusters themselves. By tapping the characters' portraits on the right side of the touch screen, you can swap heroes on the fly; each has different abilities (Egon can use tools, for example), and you can issue simple commands (stay or follow) to the characters you aren't controlling. Unlike the console versions of the game, the DS version lets you drive around the city in the Ecto-1, accepting missions and battling ghosts in random encounters. The Ecto-1 also stores a variety of equipment, which you can use as your tasks call for.

Though the 3-D driving scenes are controlled via the Control Pad and buttons, the bulk of the gameplay is viewed from a top-down perspective and controlled with the help of the touch screen. By touching and holding the stylus on the lower screen, you can fire your blast stream, and by holding L and drawing a line from your character, you can throw out a trap. In addition, the game features light RPG elements, such as the ability to enhance your stats (including your health, attack strength, and research ability) and upgrade your ghost-catching gear. Developed by Zen Games, the DS version of Ghostbusters is scheduled to ship simultaneously with the Wii version.

both movies back to back without interruption. I took an afternoon to do that, and was delighted with both of them. I thought, "Wow, they really hold up." I just listened to my voice again and got that boyish enthusiasm back, I think. I think game players will be quite pleased.

Do you play video games at all?
Well, of course, I'm a big fan of the plumber. You start your kids off—that's probably the first game they play. I'm a little shy on the Halo game because it's just so very gun-oriented. With the Ghostbusters game, we're not blowing the entities away. We're sending them back where they came from, sort of. I mean, they do get blown away, but they are from the afterworld anyway, so they have no place else to go. I think from a family point of view it will [play well]. I haven't gotten a Wii yet; I must say, though, [Mr. Miyamoto] is great. I love that guy.... What an amazing mind he has. Incredible.

Was there any aspect of the *Ghostbusters* films that you absolutely did not want to revisit?
Not really, no. I think they held up pretty well. In fact, the whole premise serves the format of game-playing so well, because you're working in a netherworld where anything can come flying out of a corner of the room, and you've got technology to deal with—good technology in the throwers and the streams and the trap mechanisms. You've got characters that people already know and recognize. So I just thought it's a really great fit. I don't see where there would be a rough edge you'd have to smooth off, because the two marry each other so well.

How have your beliefs in the supernatural influenced the Ghostbusters game and the franchise in general?
Well, I think first of all going into it you've got to accept that there's an afterlife. And also that there may be other dimensions that we don't know about—hinted at in *Indiana Jones*, of course, with the climax of the movie that there's inter-dimensional beings traveling back and forth. Now, Ramis does not believe in an

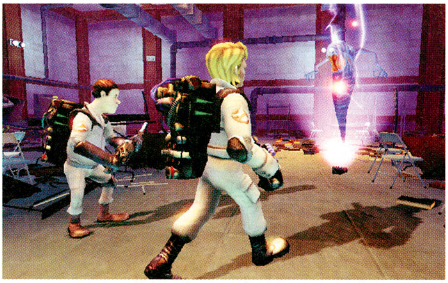
the library, where the Ghostbusters will finally get to take their revenge on the Gray Lady (the librarian ghost that scared the pants off of 'em when they tried to "get her" in the first film).

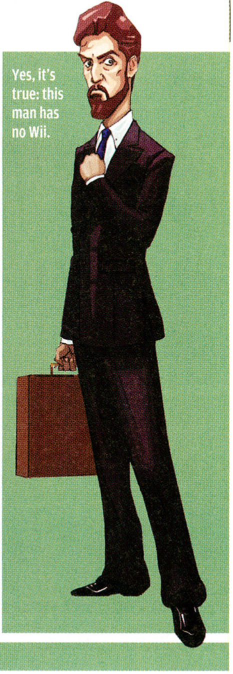
YES, HAVE SOME

Although bustin' is what makes you feel good, there's more to the game than just catching ghosts. You'll also use your equipment to solve environmental puzzles. In the library, for example, after a ghost slimes a gate, you can use your blast stream to grab onto the gate and smash it out of the way. A mission later in the game sends you back to the Sedgewick Hotel, but this time to the forbidden 13th floor—home to the Spider Witch and her creepy army of black spiders. The 13th floor is definitely not normal—the hallways rotate or twist straight up—but it's full of interesting obstacles. At one point you reach a pit that's impossible to cross, so you have to freeze the spiderwebs with the Stasis Beam then smash them with the Shock Blast to cause them to drop a large picture that you can use as a bridge. At another point you discover that there's no exit to a room, but there is a painting of a door nearby. By spraying slime onto the picture, you're able to grab it with the blast stream and pull it into position, at which point it becomes an actual door.

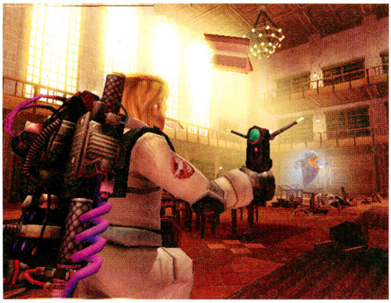
And that's just for starters. Later levels take you into the New York Public Museum, Times Square (where you'll battle the Stay-Puft Marshmallow Man from the rooftops), Central Park, and more. A movie-quality plot ties it all together, and although Sierra won't let us reveal much yet, we can say that the game will introduce a major new female character. Additionally, we can tell you that the story will answer some questions left hanging after the first two films, and that Gozer-worshipping architect Ivo Shandor did more than design Dana Barrett's infamous apartment building. To top it off, the developers at Red Fly have access to the films' complete original scores (plus nearly 70 minutes of unused, never-before-heard music) as well as nearly every song that appeared in the movies—including Ray Parker Jr.'s iconic Ghostbusters theme.

So far Ghostbusters: The Video Game is hitting all the right notes—meshing classic characters with an original yet authentic story and immersive gameplay that's possible only on Wii. Come this October, you'll know who to call.

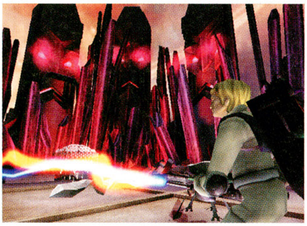




Yes, it's true: this man has no Wii.



All the Ghostbusters' trademark gear is represented, including the containment traps [above], PKE meter [left], and Neutrona Wands [below].

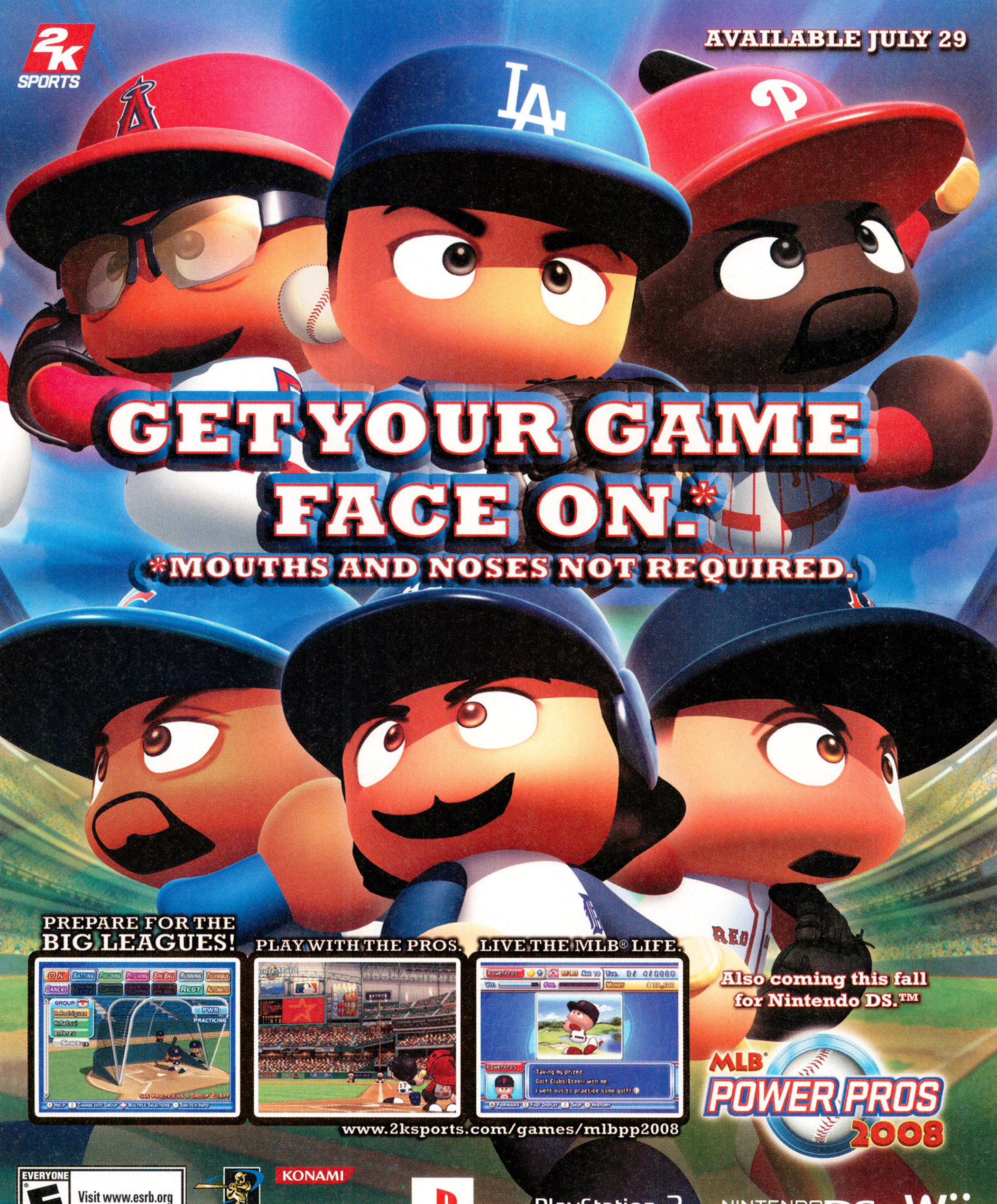


INTERVIEW DAN AYKROYD

afterlife...does not believe in inter-dimensional beings and mechanisms like the UFOs they use to get from there to here, doesn't believe in ghosts, doesn't believe in hauntings, doesn't believe in [spirit] orbs. He doesn't believe in any of that. So it was a great balance to have a skeptic working on the film so that you couldn't go too far with the concept, but my belief is evident there and evident in the *Coneheads* movie as well.

We always thought it was cool that in *Ghostbusters II*, the Statue of Liberty is controlled with an NES Advantage joystick. How did that come about?
Well, this is ectoplasm and psychic residue. The Kirlians had an experiment—they were the Russian people who used to take photos of digits that had been removed from a guy's hand and then you'd take a picture and the aura would still be there. They weighed the soul, the atomic soul, at one point.... But one of the things they filmed was a woman blowing smoke into a fishbowl and then shaping letters with the smoke once it was inside there. And there are many mentalists, and I can tell you for sure that there are people who can levitate....

Actually, I was wondering more about how the Nintendo controller got in there.
Well, of course! What other controller would there be in this world? Is there any other one? Certainly, it was the first I ever saw, and ever played. You guys were the only guys in the game then. [An Atari controller] would have been a throwback reference, a recall joke. But Nintendo, obviously, yeah. It's spectacular to have this association and to know that Ghostbusters is going to go on and impact a whole new culture—that is, the game-playing culture. It's just been a wonderful, satisfying experience, better than I'd ever hoped. It gets me in the gaming world. I'm going to polish off some of these scripts and maybe see—there might be another one coming up.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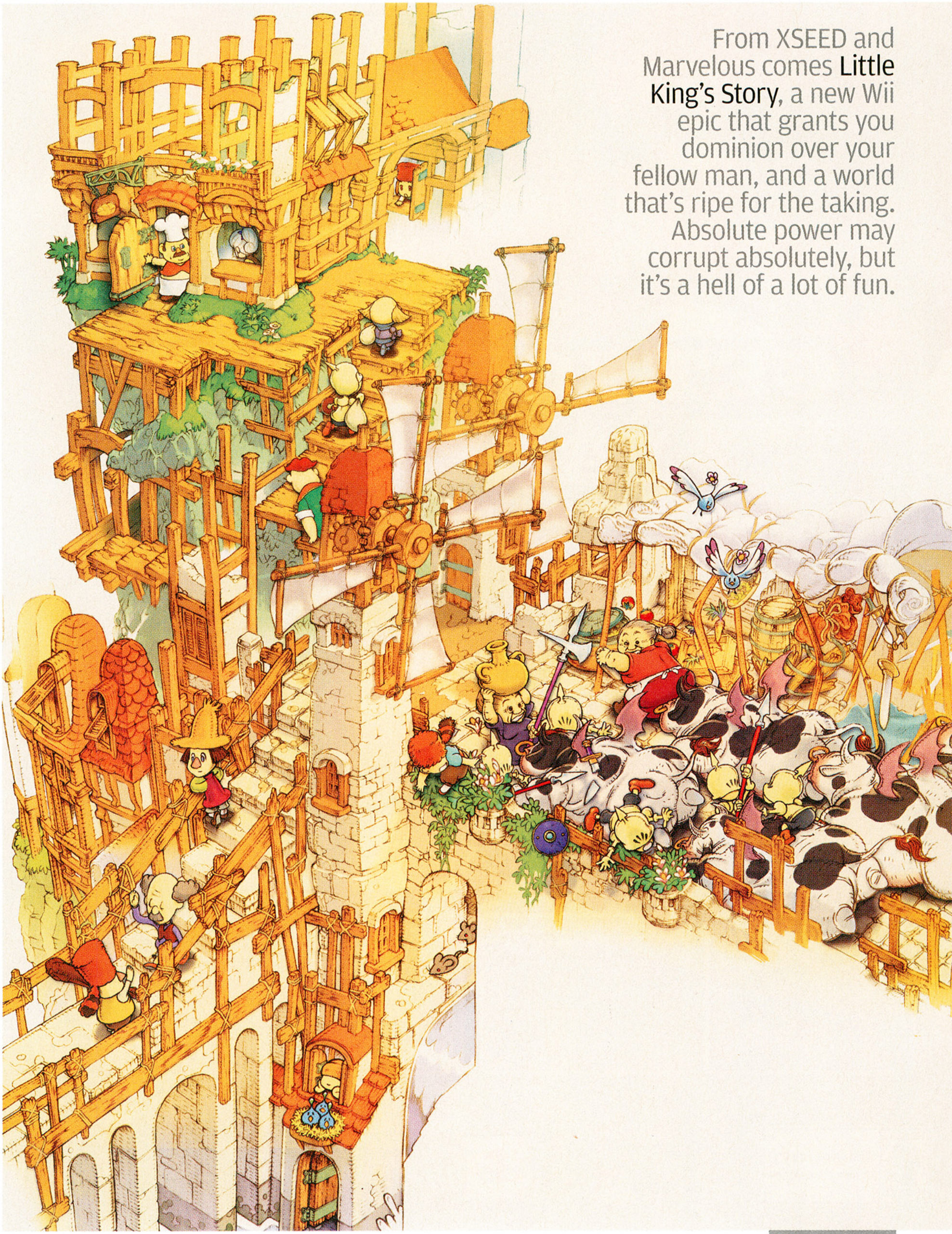


From XSEED and Marvelous comes **Little King's Story**, a new Wii epic that grants you dominion over your fellow man, and a world that's ripe for the taking. Absolute power may corrupt absolutely, but it's a hell of a lot of fun.

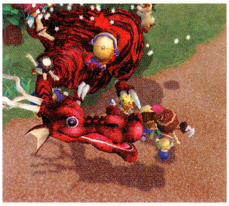
BY CASEY LOE

IT'S GOOD TO BE THE KING

In the first five minutes of Little King's Story, young Corobo Bred finds a legendary crown that gives him total control over his fellow man. With one swing of Corobo's scepter, any human alive will fall in behind him, and whatever he points that scepter at next, his subjects will launch themselves at with a fiery zeal. Got a log in your way? One tap of the A Button and the first peasant in line will tear it into splinters with their bare hands. Got a monster that needs killing? Your peasant entourage will fight it till their dying breaths. Got a bridge that needs building? Well...that's beyond the abilities of a typical commoner, but when Corobo points his scepter toward the door of the local Builder's Workshop, his nearest follower will abandon his life's ambitions and become an accredited carpenter within seconds.

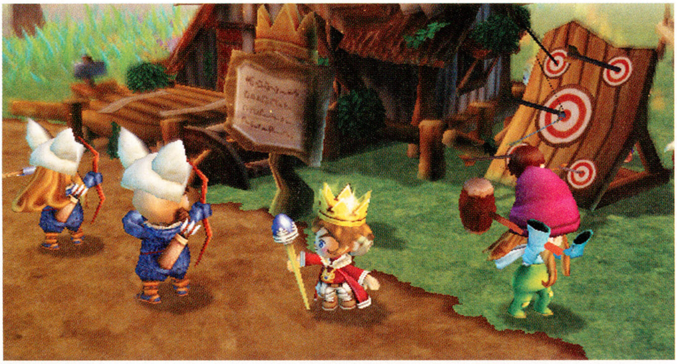
"Everyone wants to be great sometime in their life, right? Like the president, or a CEO or something," notes producer Yoshiro Kimura. That fantasy was the impetus of Little King's Story, a rare RPG in which the hero begins at the top. Of course, Corobo's kingdom initially consists of just five guys and a cow, so it will be a long road to world domination. Corobo can gradually expand his kingdom by completing the quests that villagers bring when he sits upon his throne, which earns him material rewards that can be invested into new roads, parks, and buildings. He can also take a more active approach by leading followers on adventures and having them loot items from foes, mine materials from rocks and fallen trees, and dig for buried treasures (which include glowing golden orbs that raise Corobo's level and increase the number of followers that he can lead). The young king will also discover giant pots that can be smashed open to reveal a family of new citizens for his kingdom. That last part doesn't make a whole lot of sense, but Corobo needs warm bodies to do his dirty work, and he doesn't have time to wait for the old ones to breed.

A PAIR OF KINGS

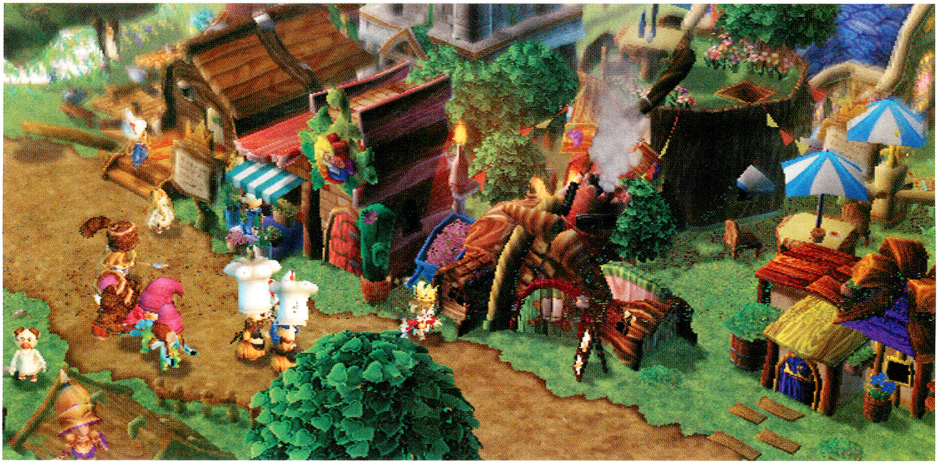


The developers at Marvelous surely thought that they were tapping into something wildly original with Little King's Story, so one can only imagine their surprise when Square Enix beat them to market with a WiiWare game about an all-powerful boy king striving to carve out a kingdom in a monster-filled world. Little King's Story and My Life as a King share a premise, but the games play out quite differently. While both titles feature the joys of watching a great kingdom rise out of a plot of dirt and weeds, Corobo doesn't deal with the zoning issues personally. "The player does choose the general direction of the development of the kingdom, but you don't need to sweat the details," explains Kimura, dispelling a misconception about the game. Normally, you'll just put the plans and ideas of your subordinates into action and move on."

Instead of overseeing bakery placements, Corobo will be leading his followers on a grand adventure that involves exploring and ultimately conquering the seven other kingdoms of his world. It's sort of like playing The Legend of Zelda, except that instead of throwing bombs at the boulders that block his path, Corobo throws peasant laborers. And while Corobo can't fight for himself, he will be right there on the front lines, hurling his followers into the fray and backing them up with spells that can boost their stats or heal their wounds. "[My Life as a King] is an actual simulation game," says Kimura, "while Little King's Story is a funny, fairy-tale story." So while you can hang out at the castle and sit



To expand your roster of classes, you'll first need to build guildhalls to train new recruits. These new Animal Hunter recruits are already splitting arrows...from all of 10 feet away.



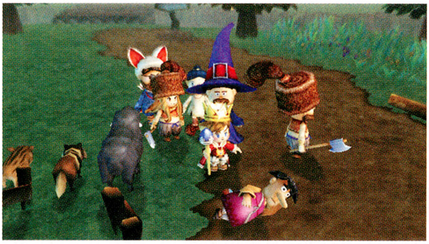
on your throne as much as you want, the game's focus is more on conquest than on domestic governance. Corobo's tiny kingdom is surrounded by seven rival nations and, in Kimura's words, "you'll need to conquer them all to spread the influence of your one righteous kingdom."

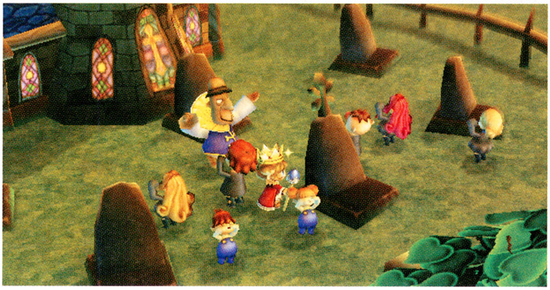
THE CUTEST FUNERALS EVER

The focus on exploration and conquest and the simple, satisfying control scheme make Little King's Story feel like an action-RPG, but it does have plenty of interesting simulation elements working at a deeper level. Every citizen in your kingdom has his or her own name and daily schedule, which changes constantly as your kingdom expands and its population grows. Those who check the stat boxes of their citizens regularly will be shocked to find them falling in love with each other ("Friendly is hooking up with that sleazebag, Gigas? He's so wrong for her!"). Of course, all of their personal hopes and dreams disappear with a single swish of Corobo's magic scepter, and it's fun to force them into new occupations or destroy their burgeoning romances by sending one of them off to die in combat. Did I say fun? I meant sad. OK, I did mean fun—they have little funerals and everything! Everyone dresses in black. It's adorable!

Obviously, if the artists behind Little King's Story can make funerals cute, they don't have much trouble with heart-shaped trees, demonic cows, and comely princesses. Little King's Story is an impressively beautiful game, from its storybook cut-scenes (in which a filter makes prerendered CG look like crayon sketches), to its chalk-on-a-blackboard automap, to its weird and intricate buildings. Everything in the world seems to be in constant high spirits, with dancing trees, swaying flowers, and rhythmically gyrating boulders. Even King Corobo's army of peasants couldn't look happier about his majesty's high-handed leadership.

Our hands-on time with Little King's Story covered only the first of the game's six chapters, in which we managed to swell our entourage to a dozen happy peasants. The game can easily handle a party of 13 running through crowded streets, and the developers are aiming for parties of up to 50 followers—a





[Left] Gigas has received the nation's highest honor—the glory of dying for his King. Now can we hurry this along, padre? I have a world to conquer!

technical marvel for sure. "The programming is being headed up by Youichi Kawaguchi of Dragon Quest VIII fame," says Kimura. "He's with TownFactory now. We needed the code to be as efficient as possible, so that's why we got Kawaguchi-san to supervise the development."

LITTLE DESPOT'S STORY

As bright and charming as everything in Little King's Story is, it's still not enough to compensate for the darkness in my own soul—I'm a horrible, terrible king. ("Gigas, you don't deserve Friendly! Go swing your frying pan at that dragon until you die. And I'm writing down the names of everyone who attends your funeral!") Of course, you can be a benevolent ruler if you want—wounded villagers age prematurely, so it's easy to pull them out of battle when you see them sporting gray hair and a ZZ Top beard. You can even—shudder—participate in town-hall meetings in which the issues of the day are decided by majority vote (you can register your own opinion with a vigorous shake of the Wii Remote). Oh, I'm sure you intend to rule with a gentle hand *now*, but we'll see how you behave when the crown of absolute power sits upon your head. Your own personal reign of terror begins this winter.

THE STORY BEHIND *the* STORY

Producer Yoshiro Kimura and Executive Producer Yasuhiro Wada explain why they left the safe farmland of Harvest Moon to establish an original fairy-tale monarchy.

NINTENDO POWER What was your original inspiration for Little King's Story, and how has the game evolved since?

WADA Let me tell you about how the project got started. First, Cing [developers of Trace Memory and Hotel Dusk] and I got to talking about how we should do something together, but since we still hadn't set our minds on something in particular, we needed someone that could make the project a reality despite the long distance from Tokyo to Kyushu. I knew the exact person for the project, so my job was already done from the moment I called Kimura-san.

KIMURA I asked Wada-san, "Can't you make anything other than Harvest Moon?" [laughs] Joking aside, I really had thought that ever since I came to this company. If you were going to keep making Harvest Moon, why don't you make a different story? I maintain that you always have to make something new. After that was established and we decided the main character to be a king, not much has changed since our original vision.

WADA We all feel the same about wanting to create something new, but we're also caught in the dilemma that if we make something too new, no one would follow us.

How did you manage to recruit Kingdom Hearts composer Yoko Shimomura to compose for the game?

KIMURA Well, you know, she's a friend of mine of 15 years. She's a really interesting person. Please keep in mind that she is only a contributor and not the full composer for the game, but since she is so talented we were happy to receive anything she was willing to contribute.

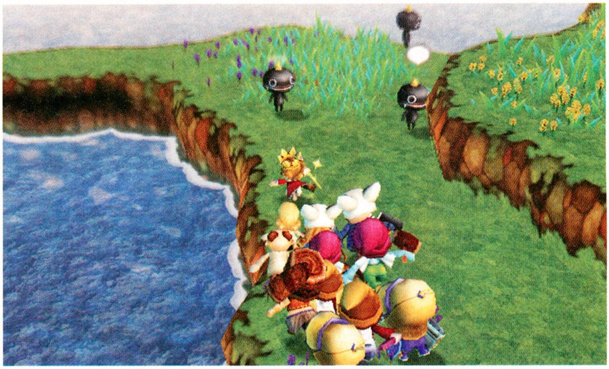
Cing is famous for their storytelling. Will Little King's Story have an intricate central story, or will you leave it to players to create one?

KIMURA The story isn't intricate at all. It's really simple, almost mindless. But there are plenty of things to do in-game so it should be fun regardless of the story. You'll encounter a lot of kings that are even stranger than Corobo, so look forward to that.

WADA I'll add that though it might not have a deep story in the traditional sense, it has the fun gameplay of a simulation game, so you can kind of feel the "story." Sort of like how Harvest Moon doesn't have an actual story, but you can make your own depending on the events you experience. In that sense, it's sort of an RPG.

What sort of relationships do you envision players having with their followers? A lot of work seems to have gone into making them feel like individuals.

KIMURA The relationship between the player and followers is the relationship between a king and his subjects. That relationship will never change. The person with the most power is the king, but the citizens can grow to love or hate him. The player will act as the



king and is free to care for the followers or work them to death.

Each of the citizens is living their own lives, but they will always have to obey all of the king's commands, even when they're busy with their own personal problems! The king has to work for the happiness of all his subjects, but he can disrupt their way of life if he chooses. Each NPC has a personality, so you really get the feeling that you are sacrificing each and every one of their personal lives for the greater good for the kingdom.

Will there be any online elements incorporated into the game? For example, will it be possible to visit friends' kingdoms?
KIMURA Recently, MMOs seem to be all the rage, but I don't think you need to play an MMO to enjoy a fantasy world. A well-made packaged fantasy world, story, and game system can offer much denser content to the player. I always daydreamed when I was young and I loved playing in fictional worlds. Did everybody else do this too? Even in a fictional world, you can experience real emotions. In this game, the player is the king so you can experience the ups and downs of being at the top. I really want the player to enjoy that.

By the way, you will *not* be able to connect to the network with the first Little King's Story. You won't have to worry about someone coming into your beloved kingdom and messing things up or having to do annoying chats over the network. [laughs] If we make a half-hearted attempt at giving it network capabilities, it would ruin the imagination and image of the perfect world that we created. However, just because you can't connect to the network doesn't mean it's a single-player game all the way. We did implement a little something in the game, though the details are still a secret.

Your games often have multiple objectives, in the way Harvest Moon is as much about creating a family as it is about farming. Does Little King's Story have a secondary objective?
KIMURA Yes, it does. There will be quests and minievents and whatnot. When sitting on your throne, you can accept various requests from your townspeople. Of course, you're still the most important person in your kingdom, but any good king has to keep in mind the happiness of his subjects. There will be many surprises during the course of your everyday life performing tasks to improve your kingdom, but there's also a larger story going on that involves saving a princess.

Terms like "accessible" and "easy-to-play" often leave hardcore gamers worried that the game might be too simple for their tastes. How would you respond to their fears?
KIMURA Well, there are many deep elements to this game, like controlling numerous characters in battle and NPCs that move around according to individual AI. The foundation of it is pretty hardcore and deep. So we're trying to make something that's already "hard" to become something "easy." So casual gamers can play it casually while hardcore gamers can play through everything the game has to offer.

The objective of Little King's Story seems to be becoming a great king, but what if you want to become a bad one? Can you be cruel to your subjects, or invade other nations?
KIMURA Well, I don't know about that. Maybe we should add a "dark side" mode or something. [laughs]

Even with the current game, you can definitely be cruel to your subjects by having them work really hard or send them off to tough battles, but you will have to attend their funeral services if they die, so it's a tradeoff. There are seven other rival kingdoms in the world and you have to conquer them all to spread the influence of your one righteous kingdom, so yes, invading other nations is involved.

Now that you've assembled this dream team of developers, what's next? Will you continue to work as a team, or do you prefer to select different developers for different projects?
KIMURA We are all working very hard to try to finish the game. Who knows—maybe if Little King's Story becomes a huge hit, I can reassemble our team for a sequel? [laughs] Each development team is unique and usually best suited to a specific type of game, but I know this team we have right now is perfect for what we're trying to do.

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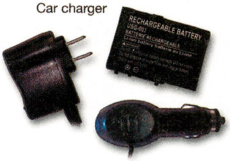

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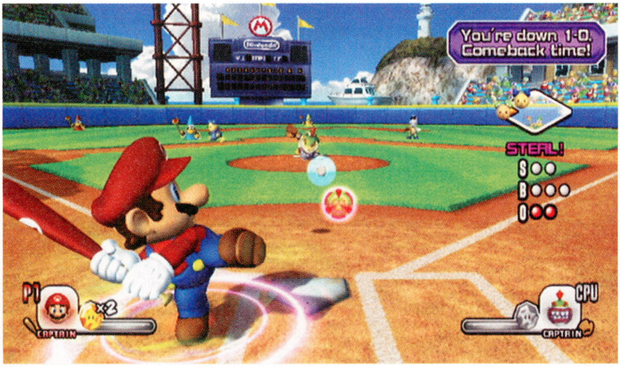
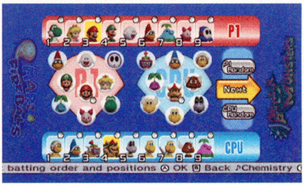
OUT OF THE PARK

The plumber and his party pals dust off their mitts for Wii's Mario Super Sluggers, a sports game that adventure fans should pay close attention to.

BY CHRIS SLATE



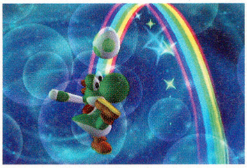


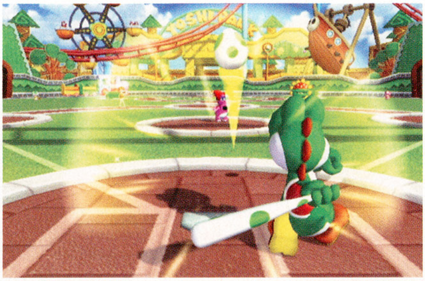
The Mario crew has starred in dozens of sports titles over the years, and while the games have almost always been fun, they've also been simple multi-player affairs that offered little for players to sink their teeth into. However, Mario Super Sluggers—the follow-up to 2005's Mario Superstar Baseball for GameCube—will step up to the plate to change that with a grand adventure-game-style quest and many other snazzy new modes and features.

Like Mario's other sports titles, Super Sluggers trades realism for an over-the-top arcade-style take on its chosen game. While the core rules of baseball are still firmly in place, players will also have to dodge flying bananas and exploding Bob-ombs. Additionally, the batting, pitching, and fielding controls focus on being fun more than being faithful. Don't mistake this simplified approach as kiddy fare, however. As with the Mario Golf games, there's a respectable amount of depth beneath the game's anyone-can-play exterior. Most real-world baseball strategies will work, and there are added tactical touches like team chemistry—players who have bonded with each other can perform special moves together, so picking their positions around the field becomes a kind of logic puzzle. Of course, you also have to consider each character's skill ratings at pitching, batting, fielding, and running, as well as their unique Star Swing and Star Pitch, which are dazzling game-changing techniques that must be charged up before they are unleashed. Each character even comes with a special extra skill, such as the Super Jump or the Ball Dash (the latter gives the player a speed boost when they have the ball). Baseball fans should enjoy the stat-based strategy of configuring the perfect team, and it's all presented simply enough for casual sports fans to enjoy, too.

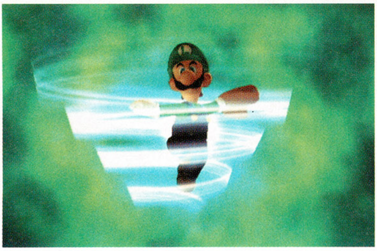
BASEBALL WITH A STORY TO TELL

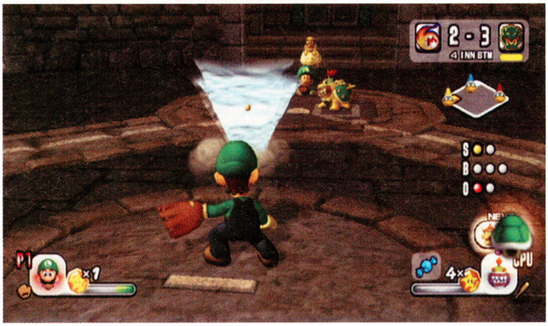
All of the game's action takes place in Princess Peach's new Baseball Kingdom, an island made of baseball stadiums, shops, hidden locations, and other areas. A nicely rendered opening movie introduces the game world and sets up the story-based Challenge mode, in which Bowser and son show up in a floating castle to take over the island with their brutal





Playing well charges up Star Swings (above) and Star Pitches (below), both of which are heavy on special effects and provide the extra oomph you need in a key moment.





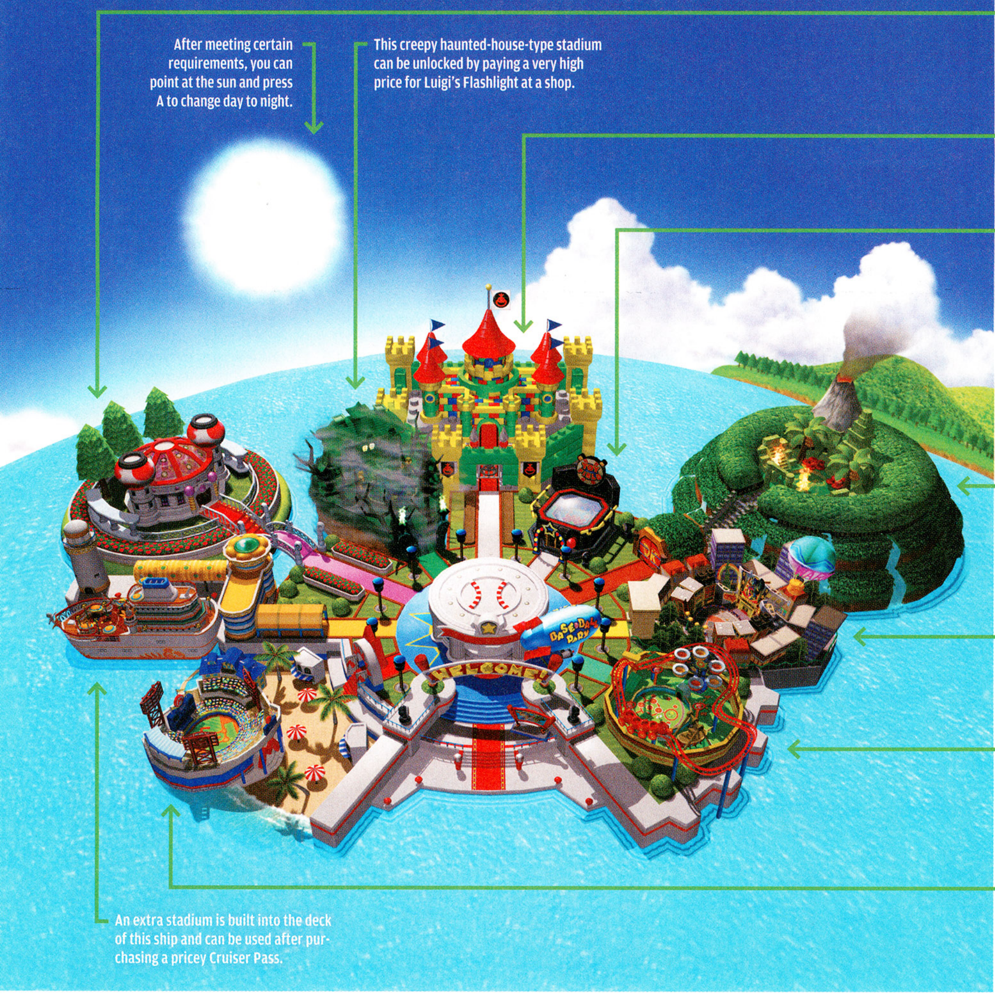
style of bad-boy baseball. (Maybe the Koopa King is just miffed that his favorite princess left him off the guest list when even Wario and Waluigi got invitations?) It's this "world of baseball" setting and story that elevates Super Sluggers above being just another bit of multiplayer fun, especially in the quest offered by the aforementioned Challenge Mode (more on that a little later).

A DIFFERENT BRAND OF BASEBALL

Super Sluggers is a much better fit for casual sports fans than hardcore sims like Major League Baseball 2K8 or MLB Power Pros. The game builds upon the simple pitching and batting mechanics introduced in Wii Sports baseball, and fielding—controlled with the nunchuk's Control Stick—can be set to auto so that the game can

WELCOME *to the* BASEBALL KINGDOM

Princess Peach built a baseball paradise for all of her friends (best use of Mushroom Kingdom taxpayer money *ever*), and we've got your advance look at the island's many unique stadiums and other points of interest.



After meeting certain requirements, you can point at the sun and press A to change day to night.

This creepy haunted-house-type stadium can be unlocked by paying a very high price for Luigi's Flashlight at a shop.

An extra stadium is built into the deck of this ship and can be used after purchasing a pricey Cruiser Pass.

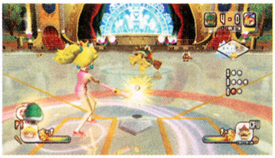
be played with just the Wii remote. We're betting that most Nintendo Power readers know how to handle their nunchuk, however, so we'll be discussing the full control set here.

A normal swing of the bat is as simple as waving the Wii remote forward, but you can pull the remote back first to power up a charge swing (when you pull back is crucial, as you'll want to hit the ball the moment your charge peaks). You hold the nunchuk's Z Button to bunt. A very handy targeting reticle shows exactly where your bat's sweet spot is, and the Control Stick lets you move the character around the batter's box to line up the reticle with an incoming pitch.

The pitching controls are similar to the ones for batting. You can throw a normal pitch by just swinging the remote downward, or you can charge a fastball by first swinging the remote upward—again, timing is key to getting the most out of a charge. Holding the A Button during a throw will result in an off-speed pitch, while holding both A and B together triggers a character's unique superpowered Star Pitch (such as Mario's fireball).

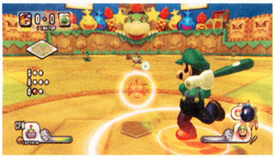
With the full controls, the Control Stick moves characters around the field (shaking the remote from side to side makes them run faster), and a downward wave of the remote throws the ball (holding up, left, right, or down on the Control Stick determines which base you throw to). After hitting a pitch, the batter will sometimes have the option to fire an Error Item into the infield or outfield (move an onscreen target via the remote, then press A to fire) in an attempt to trip up the fielders maneuvering to catch the ball. The defense isn't totally helpless, however, and can time a quick press of the B Button to knock back or dodge bananas, Bob-ombs, or anything else that is thrown their way.

Finally, characters that have chemistry with each other can perform two types of advanced double-team moves in the outfield, each of which requires expert timing. The first technique, called a Buddy Toss, is performed when the player taps B the moment a character reaches the ball; he'll immediately scoop up the ball and



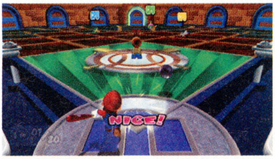
PEACH ICE GARDEN

The ice reflections are pretty, but the roving blocks of ice will freeze outfielders with just a touch!



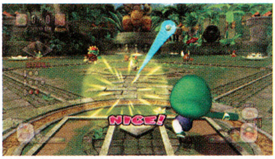
BOWSER JR. PLAY ROOM

After a win here in Challenge mode, Jr.'s room is replaced by a tougher stadium: Bowser Castle.



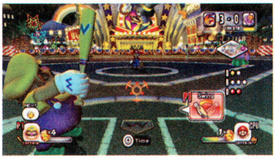
TOY FIELD

A bonus game is played here: players take turns batting while everyone else tries to catch (and keep) the most balls.



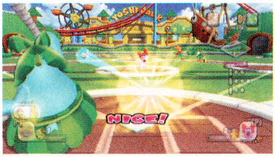
DK JUNGLE

The DK crew is in full effect with a cool jungle stadium and a roster that includes Donkey, Diddy, and Dixie Kong.



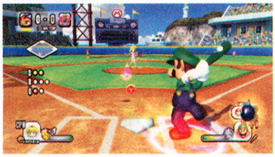
WARIO CITY

The grubby garlic-gobbler has a stage that is part Vegas and part carnival, and looks best at night when it's all lit up.



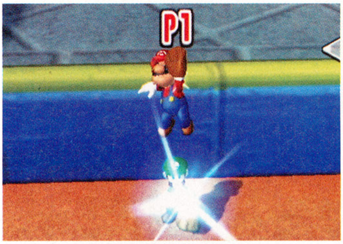
YOSHI PARK

True to Yoshi's cuter-than-cute style, his stadium is extra bright and cheery, and is surrounded by theme-park rides.

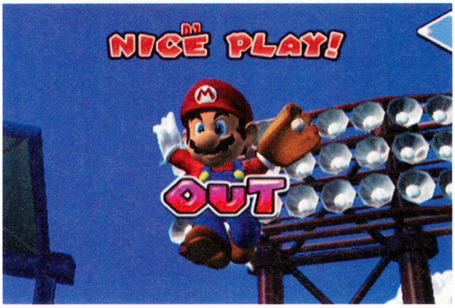


MARIO STADIUM

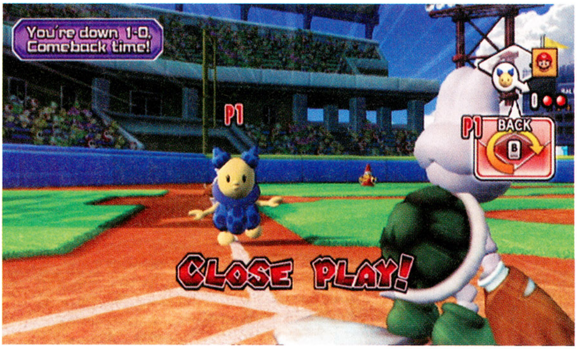
This is the game's most basic, classic ballpark, good for a straightforward game of hardball.



Two characters that have chemistry with each other can perform a special Buddy Jump in the outfield to fly high and snag a home-run-bound ball out of the air.



fire it over to a nearby teammate, who can then launch a superfast throw to the infield. The second two-man technique, the Buddy Jump, allows one outfielder to spring off another to jump high into the sky and snag a potential home run out of midair. A close play at home plate will trigger another cool event: a random button icon will quickly flash onscreen, and the first player to press the designated button on Wii remote will win the confrontation.


You're down 1-0. Comeback time!

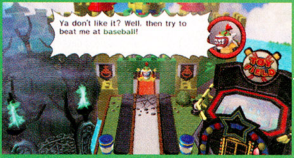
When a play is close at home plate, a random button icon will quickly appear on-screen; the player that presses the corresponding button on their Wii remote first determines if the runner is safe or out.

MANY A MODE

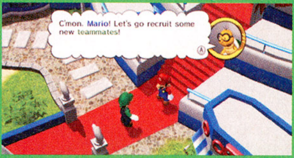
The main menu offers up six main options: Exhibition (for quick one- or two-player games), Mini-Games (various Mario Party-type events that can be played with up to four players), Practice (split into various lessons that each teach a different aspect of the game), Records (your best scores across the game's modes), Toy Field (a special bonus game in which up to four players fight to reach hit balls first), and Challenge mode. This last option is the most exciting, offering a full-on adventure in which shortened baseball games are mixed with various types of skill-testing missions, world exploration, puzzle-solving, shopping for skill-boosting items (such as the Power Bat, Charge Bat, Dash Spikes, Lucky Glove, Error Booster,

A TOUR *of* CHALLENGE MODE

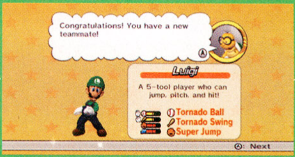
The most impressive part of Super Sluggers is Challenge mode, a robust baseball adventure that sets our heroes on a mission to drive Bowser and his party-crashing goons out of the Baseball Kingdom. Here's a peek at how the quest starts.


Ya don't like it? Well, then try to beat me at baseball!

If you want to get rid of Bowser's crew, you'll have to (gulp)...beat them in baseball. That's all? Whew!


C'mon, Mario! Let's go recruit some new teammates!

You start with only Mario, and must find and recruit new team members before you can take on Bowser.

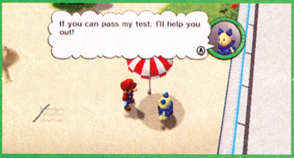

Congratulations! You have a new teammate!

Luigi

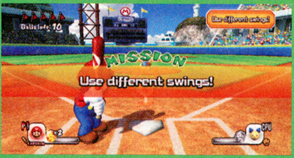
A 5-tool player who can jump, pitch, and hit!

Tornado Ball
Tornado Swing
Super Jump

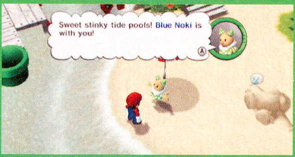
Boo-yah—team member number one! That was easy! Mr. Green Jeans is actually a great player.


If you can pass my test, I'll help you out!

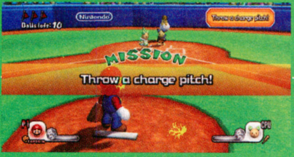
Blue Noki will join you, but he'll need to see some skills first. Doesn't this fool know who Mario is?



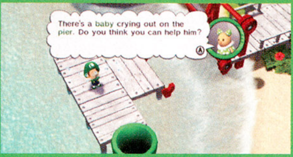
Well, we have a team of only two, so let's humor him. He wants to see Mario try different swings.


Sweet stinky tide pools! Blue Noki is with you!

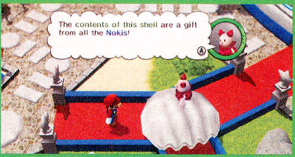
A few quick cracks of Mario's bat, and Blue Noki is on the team. Next up, his green pal.



Another test? But this is Mario! As in "Mario Super Sluggers!" Oh, all right—Charge Pitches comin' up.


There's a baby crying out on the pier. Do you think you can help him?

After a few close fastballs, Green Noki joins. What? Baby Luigi is lost? We need to lower the bridge!


The contents of this shell are a gift from all the Nokis!

Once this gal sees that Mario rolls with her fellow Nokis, she lets him pass to the drawbridge controls.

1470
610
510
24:45
0

48:38
HIT!
03
COMBO!
P1
300
CPU
75
CPU
100
CPU
75

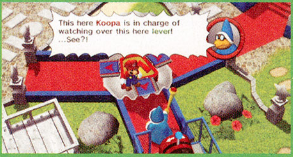
Super Sluggers packs in several mini-games that test different baseball skills; each can each be played with up to four players.

49:51
P1
280
CPU
0
CPU
0
CPU
270

and Buddy Badge), and recruiting characters from a list of more than 30 Mario-series regulars to your team's roster. (See the sidebar below for a detailed look at this mode.) Unfortunately, there's no ability to compete over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection; the feature feels strangely absent after having been the focus of Mario's only other sports outing on Wii, Mario Strikers Charged.

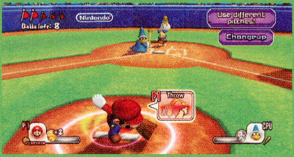
PLAY BALL!

Based on the half-dozen hours or so that we've spent playing Mario Super Sluggers, the game seems to have a lot of great things going for it. It's accessible enough for anyone to pick up and start playing, has extra strategic depth for pro players to explore, comes loaded with plenty of great modes, offers a much better single-player experience than many other Mario sports games, and features graphics, animation, story scenes, and a fun presentation that are as polished as Nintendo's best. We'll keep playing to see how the game holds up in the long run, and we'll bring you our full review next month. Will Mario, Luigi, Peach, Yoshi, Daisy, Toad, and the others kick Bowser's spiny butt out of the Baseball Kingdom? The game's late-August release is just around the corner, so you won't have to wait very long to find out for yourself.

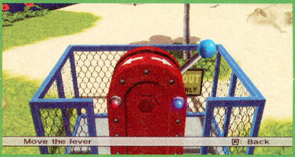


This here Koopa is in charge of watching over this here lever! ...See?!

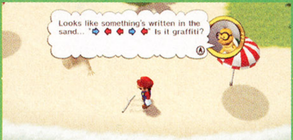
A Magikoopa appears to keep Mario from the controls. Time to dispense justice—through baseball!


Balls left: 8
Nintendo
Use different pitches!
Changeup
P1
Throw
CPU

He wants to see different pitches, so we throw him a fastball, an off-speed pitch, and a Star Swing.

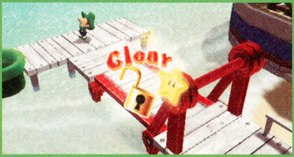

Move the lever
Ⓑ: Back

Defeated, the Magikoopa falls over and fades away. Now, what do we do with this lever?

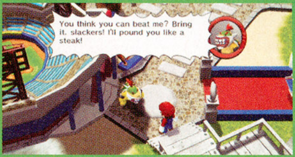


Looks like something's written in the sand... "➡ ⬅ ⬅ ➡ ⬅" Is it graffiti?

Oh, right—we thought it seemed weird that random directions had been written into the sand nearby!

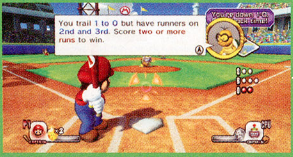


Back to the lever and—BAM! One working bridge! Baby Luigi joins, but Bowser Jr. isn't happy....



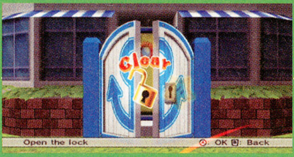
You think you can beat me? Bring it, slackers! I'll pound you like a steak!

It turns out that he preferred the bridge up. Yeah, well, Mario prefers you gone! Baseball justice!

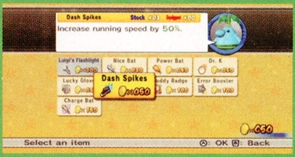


You trail 1 to 0 but have runners on 2nd and 3rd. Score two or more runs to win.

This mission is cleared as soon as Mario scores two runs, which isn't hard with runners on 2nd and 3rd.


Clear
Open the lock
Ⓐ: OK Ⓑ: Back

While Bowser Jr. makes more idle threats and runs away, he drops the key to the local shop.



Dash Spikes

Increase running speed by 50%.

Stock
Luigi's Flashlight
Nice Bat
Power Bat
Dr. K
Lucky Glove
Dash Spikes
×050
Buddy Badge
Error Booster
Charge Bat
650
Select an item
Ⓐ: OK Ⓑ: Back

The shopkeeper joins the team and sells useful items. We'll end our tour here—the rest is up to you!

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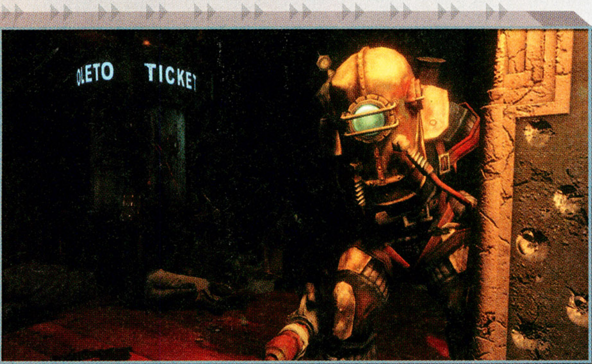
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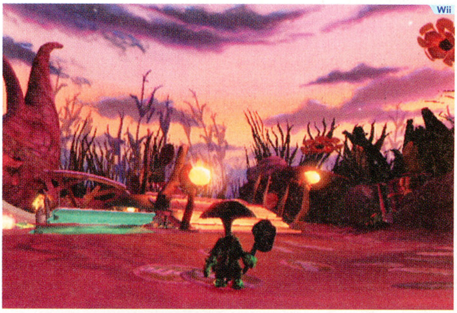
G.KNOWLEDGE.

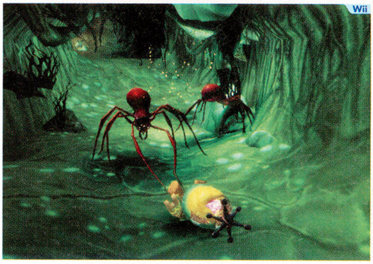
FUNGUS AMONG US

The fungi are going to war on Wii and DS. Prepare yourself for the invasion of the Mushroom Men!

BY KAISER HWANG



With concept art evoking the B-movies of the '50s, a soundtrack composed by Les Claypool of Primus fame, and a publisher named Gamecock, Red Fly Studios' Mushroom Men clearly knows how to make a statement. But it's not all about eccentricities. Both Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi and Mushroom Men: The Spore Wars, for DS and Wii respectively, are solid platformers that we're excited to play more of.



As Pax takes damage, parts of his head/cap will break off, exposing his brain.

"The DS game and the Wii game are totally separate products," explains Gamecock producer Chad Barron. "The DS game is not a port of the Wii game. In fact, the DS game is like a prequel to the Wii game, and defines how it all started for the Mushroom Men." In a nutshell, a meteorite crashes down to Earth, gets labeled harmless by humans, and brings four species of mushrooms to life: the "good" Boletes and Morels, and the "bad" Amanitas and Lepiotas.

THE BEGINNING

Rise of the Fungi is a side-scrolling platformer that allows you to play as a scout, a sage, or a heavy. The scout excels in ranged combat, the sage in spore powers (magic), and the heavy in melee combat. You're not locked into using a well-balanced party, though: all levels can be completed with any character class. You're also not locked into solo play: Rise of the Fungi can be played wirelessly with a friend in a co-op mode that spans the entire campaign. The game's difficulty will scale as needed as well.

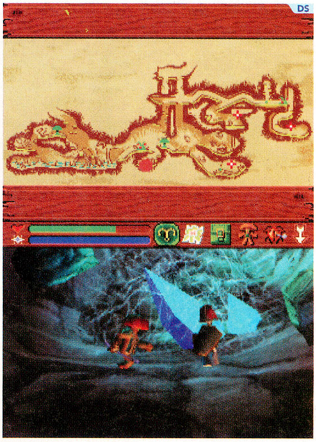
Though Rise of the Fungi is strictly a 2-D affair when it comes to gameplay, the graphics are rendered in full 3-D, allowing for unique camera movements, more-sophisticated lighting, and an overall modern look. The graphics engine, created by ZEN Studios in Budapest, is one of the better ones we've seen on DS—there are colorful and detailed graphics, but nary a hiccup in the frame rate.

Unfortunately, controls in the game require using the Control Pad, face buttons, and stylus all in the same level, forcing you to have the stylus in-hand while you're pressing buttons. We'd love to see an option for stylus-only controls, especially given the 2-D nature of the gameplay. Still, this inconvenience is by no means a deal-breaker, and we found the game completely playable as is.

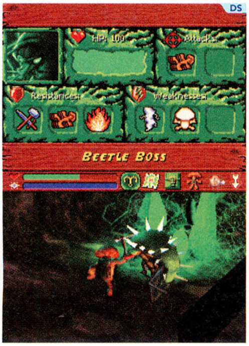
GOING BIG SCREEN

The Spore Wars takes place after the events in Rise of the Fungi, and graduates the gameplay to 3-D. But that's not the only change. "One of the major differences is that you play as just one character [in The Spore Wars], so we're trying to personalize the narrative a little bit more," says Ryan Mattson, lead designer on the game. This narrative will focus on a rebel Bolete named Pax as he discovers his true self and meaning in the world.

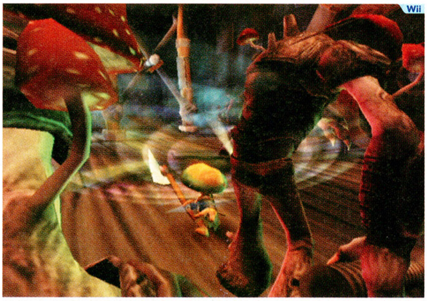
Gameplay is a mix of platforming, puzzle-solving, and combat, with two features that help it stand out in a crowded genre: spore powers and the Scav system. Spore powers can be anything from telekinesis to simple interaction with parts of

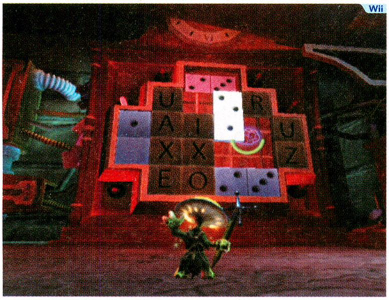


The super-handy interactive map always makes clear what and where your objectives are.

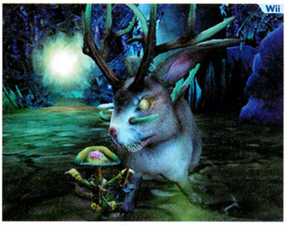


the spore-infested environments, and seem to focus mostly on aiding exploration and puzzles. The Scav system is a weapons/items interface that lets you combine certain objects (categorized as stems, caps, and parts) to create new blunt, slashing, and piercing weapons. For instance, you start the game with a DS stylus as a weapon, but eventually you find some chewed bubblegum and a thimble that you can combine using the stylus to create a more powerful, macelike object called the Iron Thumb. (You'll also find special weapons throughout the game as needed.) Rise of the Fungi features the Scav system as well, but in that game each Scav item can be used with only one weapon at a time. In The Spore Wars, weapon "recipes" are logged so all weapons that use a particular item are accessible at any time, never requiring you to break down a weapon for its parts.





There are a number of cool mini-games integrated into the levels, as well as horned rabbits.



MUSHROOM SEASON

There's quite a bit of combat in The Spore Wars, and the Scav system provides the requisite tools of destruction. In the early build we played, however, the lack of a lock-on feature and a not-yet-steady camera system made attacking a group of enemies a slightly messy affair; one-on-one combat was much easier. Given the large area of some of the environments, running away and finding alternate routes was often the most efficient solution. Red Fly Studios emphasized that there are still a few months left in the development period, so there's plenty of time for polishing up the rougher areas of the game before the games' winter release.

The Mushroom Men gameplay style will be familiar to most, but in a sea of Wii and DS games, the Mushroom Men titles carve out a niche stylistically, and that can go a long way. From the memorable concept art to the signature Claypool tunes, the Mushroom Men games have a lot more going for them than other games in the genre. **—KAISER H.**

INTERVIEW **LES CLAYPOOL**

MUSIC MAN

Les Claypool is best known for being the lead singer and bassist of Primus (which disbanded in 2000), but he's a man of many talents, working on numerous solo albums, directing a film, and writing a book. We chatted with Claypool about his latest project, the Mushroom Men soundtrack.

NINTENDO POWER Can you talk a little bit about how you came to work on Mushroom Men?

LES CLAYPOOL I get approached to do various things on occasion and sometimes...well, I never have time to do them, but sometimes I make an exception if something seems cool or interesting or unique. So the Mushroom Men thing looked really cool and I started flipping through the website. So of course my son, who's a young fellow, was looking over my shoulder, saw what I was doing, and got very excited. Pretty much every day from that day on he was asking me if I had spoken with the Mushroom Men people. All that was on his mind was the Mushroom Men video game, so it's pretty much because of him that I did the Mushroom Men project, because he was just so excited about it, and still is.

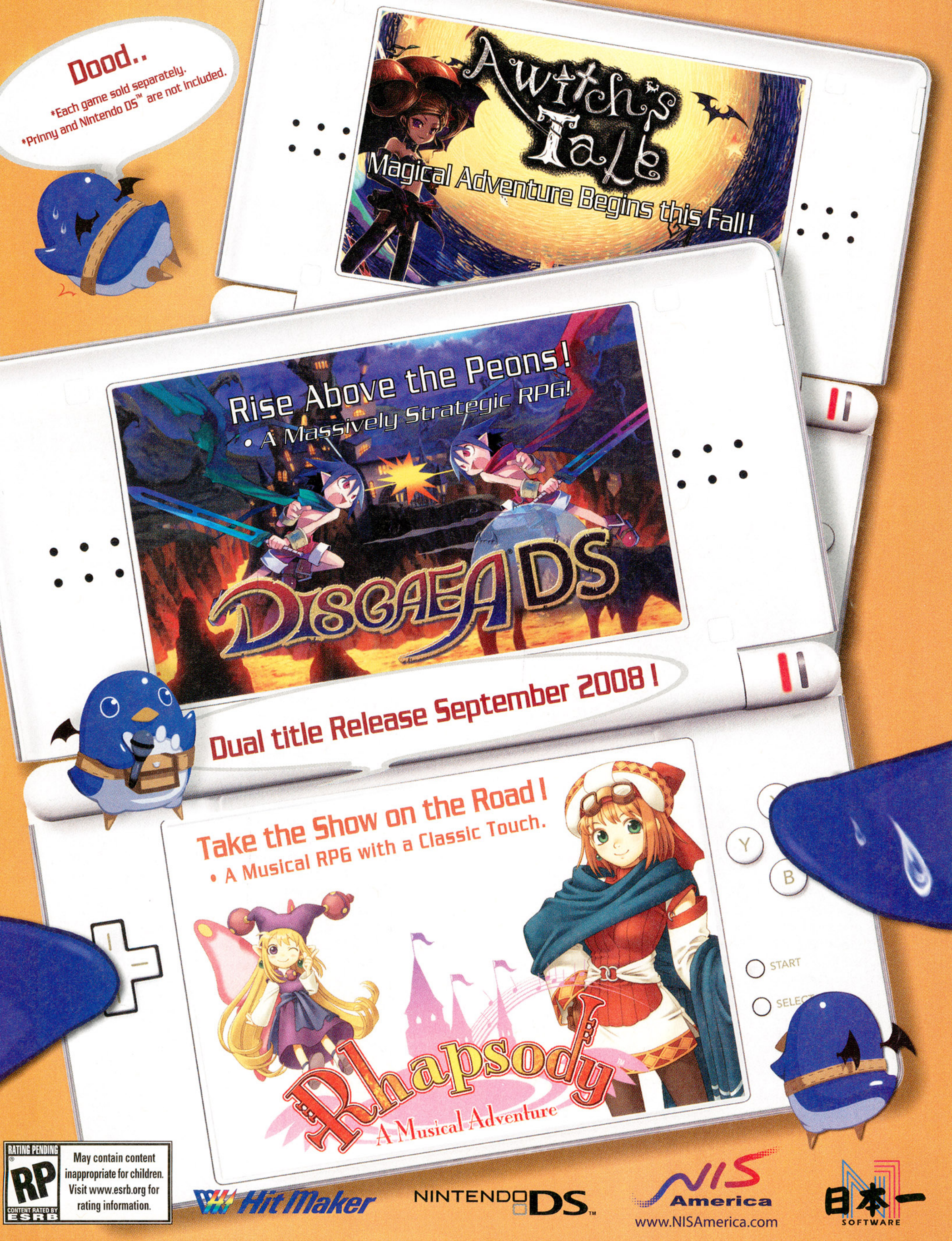
Do you have a Wii at home?
We do, and my kids have DSs.

So this is kind of a perfect project then.
Yes. Ironically, when they called, we were in mushroom-hunting season, which is generally right around November when these big king boletes start popping up around our neighborhood and my kids get a bit obsessed with it. In fact, my wife tends to get annoyed with me because I tend to slow down and look on the sides of the roads for mushrooms. So it seemed appropriate. There was a certain synchronicity to all of it that seemed to make sense.

Would you ever play any of the music you're composing for the game live?
I plan on incorporating a lot of this material into my next record, and doing live performances with it.

Will that be a solo record, or a Mushroom Men-specific record?
I'm not positive. I've actually done a few soundtracks lately. Well, I did a couple soundtracks and then a piece I did with some friends, so I've accumulated all this material. Chances are it'll make its way onto a record.

Can you sum up your experience working on Mushroom Men?
We're all excited to get the game, my son especially, to see how it all laid in and how it plays and whatnot. But overall the experience was great. It was quick and painless, and inspiring. The elements of the material got the ol' juices flowing where I could come up with some pretty freaky stuff without putting too much thought to it.


Dood..
*Each game sold separately.
*Prinny and Nintendo DS™ are not included.
A Witch's Tale
Magical Adventure Begins this Fall!
Rise Above the Peons!
• A Massively Strategic RPG!
DISGAEA DS
Dual title Release September 2008!
Take the Show on the Road!
• A Musical RPG with a Classic Touch.
Rhapsody™
A Musical Adventure
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Having a Great Time

FOR THE PAST YEAR NP's monthly sweepstakes has offered a steady diet of great game giveaways, which is what the majority of readers have told us they want. Gamers wanting games? Go figure! But for most of the magazine's history the Player's Poll prizes have been an eclectic smorgasbord of adventure trips, celebrity meet-and-greets, game-related memorabilia, and unique opportunities that you could experience only through Nintendo Power. Some turned out to be pretty lame, like the trip to meet Arnold Schwarzenegger, who spent only a few moments with our winner (there's one vote the Governator won't be getting). But most were a blast for the NP staff and the lucky winner. What made each contest particularly special was the contact with winners and the chance to learn about their gaming experiences. This month, as we cast a fond eye back at Nintendo Power's first 20 years, we pull out our photo collection of winners and their special NP moments. BY SCOTT PELLAND

HOLLYWOOD ROYALTY

Before there was *Independence Day*, *Men in Black*, or *I Am Legend*, Will Smith starred in the award-winning NBC sitcom *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* alongside DJ Jazzy Jeff. NP's winner, Kelly Koder, flew from Louisiana to Hollywood, hung out with the duo in Will's studio dressing room before a taping of the show, then met the entire cast and received an autographed script, which is now probably worth more on eBay than the Hollywood sign.

TALK LIKE A MAN

Juan Gaspar won immortality of sorts during his grand-prize trip to Iguana Entertainment in Austin, TX, where his likeness and voice were included in Turok's second adventure for the N64, entitled Turok 2: Seeds of Evil. Project leader Dave Dienstbier and team graciously trooped outside to take a group photo with Juan; it was the first time in months that the dedicated team had left their cubicles, and some reportedly got lost on the way back.

ROCKY ROADS

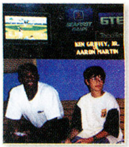
Motor races don't get much more punishing than the Baja 500 cross-country race in Mexico, as NP winner Adam Rhody discovered when he joined Ivan "Ironman" Stewart's support team during the legendary race. Adam rode shotgun with Ivan on a jarring pre-run to check part of the course, then started off the champion's first leg by waving the green flag, raced from checkpoint to checkpoint with the team, and was there at the finish line to cheer as the Ironman took the checkered flag.

JURASSIC PERK

The Jurassic Park video games never achieved the blockbuster status that the movies enjoyed (perhaps because their dino depictions were about as realistic as Barney), but at least our connections got us a date with Dr. Jack Horner, one of the world's leading paleontologists and the film's dinosaur expert. Dr. Horner invited winner Justin Murray to a dig in Montana's fossil-rich badlands and then to Egg Mountain, near Choteau, Montana, where fossils have revealed that certain dinosaurs nested and lived in colonies like birds. Justin dug up a fossilized velociraptor tooth, which was smaller than expected, but still frightening to contemplate in light of Dr. Horner's unsettling news that actual dino DNA had been unearthed recently. Gulp.

A STAR WAS BORN

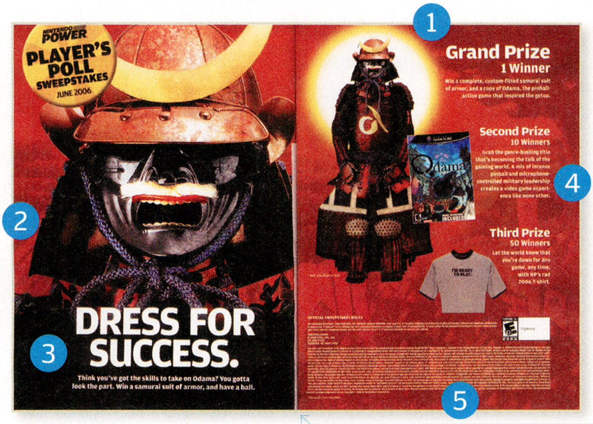
You may not remember the ill-fated *seaQuest DSV* (which inhabited the murky waters of network television on NBC from 1993 to 1996) but chances are that Player's Poll winner Seth Montgomery won't ever forget it. During the series's third and final season, in which it was given the new title *seaQuest 2032*, Seth's winning entry earned him a role as an extra. Seth, as it turned out, was brilliant in the role of a guy carrying a bin of oranges. He also spent a day on the studio lot, where he discovered that actor Don Franklin (Commander Jonathan Ford for you trivia-heads) whipped out his Game Boy whenever there was a break in the shooting schedule.



THE COMEBACK KID

A little research will reveal that Ken Griffey Jr. was once the heart and soul of the Seattle Mariners, and that the Mariners once played ball in a hollowed-out asteroid known as the Kingdome. What you probably won't find (no matter how deeply you Google) is that Junior lost his shirt to a Rockies fan and NP winner named Aaron Martin by a score of 8 to 0 when the two played Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run for SNES, and that the shellacking took place on the Kingdome's giant screen. The good news, of course, is that Griffey didn't let the loss stunt his onfield performance. Having recently belted his 600th homer, the Kid (as we fondly knew him at Nintendo) is well on his way to the Hall of Fame.

ANATOMY OF A SWEEPSTAKES



DRESS FOR SUCCESS.

Think you've got the skills to take on Odama? You gotta look the part. Win a samurai suit of armor, and have a ball.

Grand Prize
1 Winner
Win a complete, custom-fitted samurai suit of armor, and a copy of Odama, the pinball-action game that inspired the getup.

Second Prize
10 Winners
Grab the genre-busting title that's becoming the talk of the gaming world. A mix of intense pinball and microphone-controlled military leadership creates a video game experience like none other.

Third Prize
50 Winners
Let the world know that you're down for any game, any time, with NP's rad 2006 T-shirt.

OFFICIAL SWEEPSTAKES RULES

1 **A GRAND PRIZE** It's the key to a great contest. A hot prize (such as those related to a big game—or a car!) can draw as many as 30,000 entries. The prize's theme is usually related to a recent or upcoming release, and many prizes are available only through "special insider" connections. Were most people to call up a studio and ask for, say, the time-traveling phone booth used in *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure,* the studio people would just laugh and laugh.

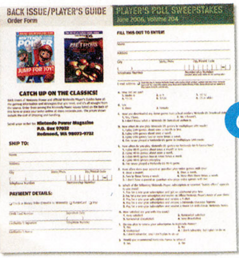
2 **COOL IMAGE** Samurai armor. 'Nuff said.

3 **CATCHY HEADLINE** Make 'em laugh or make 'em cry. Just make the reader drool in anticipation of winning the prize.

4 **SECOND PRIZES** The second prize is usually a game, and that should be enough to ease the sting of losing the big one to some dweeb in Toledo.

5 **THE RULES** The legal guys are in charge of this stuff, but it's important that you understand your rights and responsibilities as a potential sweepstakes winner, and since some jurisdictions have special rules, Nintendo Power has to either abide by them or overthrow the government in question and change the law. It's kind of a no-brainer.

6 **THE ENTRY** Sending in your entry is the most critical part of the process, of course, because without it, and without a legible name and phone number or e-mail address, an entry is just wasted paper. Until recently, the entry form in the magazine also contained the Player's Poll—a set of questions we asked readers each month—which helped us gather information from readers about products and editorial decisions.



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PLAYER'S POLL SWEEPSTAKES
June 2006, Volume 204

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TOUR DE FRANCE
Jason Berry hopped over the pond to celebrate Titus Software's Automobili Lamborghini, and Bastille Day—picture July 4th with baguettes—then went to the auto races in Dijon (the city, not the mustard) and visited Paris, where he toured the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame (the church, not the university in Indiana).

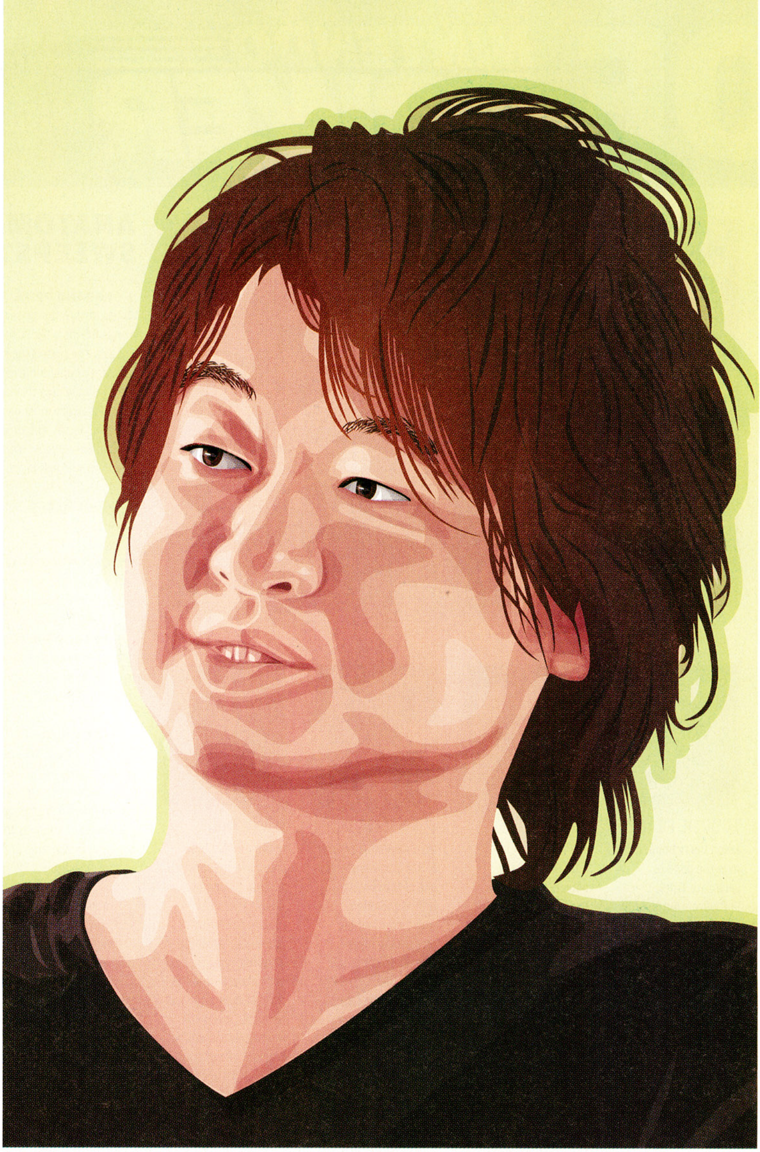
SCHOOLED BY THE HAWK
Paul Habalewsky played a little Tony Hawk Pro Skater with Tony on his tour bus in Woodstock, Illinois, where Paul learned that the Hawk knows a thing or two about his namesake games, such as *all* the moves and cheats. That's not surprising since Tony works closely with the development teams assigned to his franchise. Fortunately for Paul, Tony was a gracious winner, and after handing Paul his butt on the gaming front, he gave him an autographed Birdhouse skateboard.

COOL MAN
Matt Groening, creator of *The Simpsons*, was one of the coolest Hollywood celebs we've ever had the pleasure to meet. Former editor Leslie Swan and Player's Poll winner Danny Carr spent the afternoon with Matt, playing The Simpsons arcade game in his office and chowing down in the Fox Studios commissary among stars such as Neil Patrick Harris and James B. Sikking.

MANY TANX
In the wooded hills south of San Francisco, Andrew Krause of Illinois toured a private collection of more than 80 vintage armored vehicles; he even experienced the thrill of taking one out for a spin, where he reportedly scared the crap out of a passing squirrel. All of this was to commemorate BattleTanx: Global Assault from 3DO, a company which, somewhat ironically, was itself soon to tank.

17

Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
August 28, 1971

BIRTHPLACE
Kanazawa, Japan

POSITION
Executive Director, R&D Division for PlatinumGames

BEST KNOWN FOR
Nurturing innovation and creativity among his teams; making life viewtiful

FAVORITE FOOD
White asparagus

CURRENT PROJECT
MadWorld

Atsushi Inaba

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

As the video game market grows and budgets continue to skyrocket, developers willing to take risks are becoming an increasingly endangered species. Even many of the industry's top talents tend to focus on sequels to their past hits. But Atsushi Inaba remains devoted as ever to providing gamers with new and original experiences. Inaba began his career at Capcom, where he eventually founded Clover Studio and produced such brilliantly unorthodox fare as Viewtiful Joe and Okami. Now head of development at independent studio PlatinumGames, Inaba is working alongside fellow Clover alumni Shinji Mikami (Resident Evil) and Hideki Kamiya (Devil May Cry) to continue challenging the status quo.

NINTENDO POWER
When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

ATSUSHI INABA
I wanted to be a game creator. There wasn't any cool name for it at the time, though.

When I was 12, I touched my first PC game at a friend's house, and since then I've been hooked. I played many games, but I could not afford all the games that I wanted because I was just a kid. I would play through each game as thoroughly as possible, but I was still unsatisfied so eventually I started to hack the games and play them in new ways.

Then I began learning programming and how much fun it could be, and I thought, "If there is a job where people can have fun like this, I want to do it!" So it would be correct to say that I wanted to be a programmer, but for me at that time a game creator and a game programmer was the same thing.

PCs were very expensive when I was a kid, and I begged my parents, "Please buy me a PC, and when I become a game creator and get rich, I can buy you a house and a diamond ring." They still often remind me of this promise. Unfortunately, this commitment has not yet been fulfilled....

How has the industry changed since you started?
It's been 17 years since I entered this industry, and I was working on arcade games in the beginning. At that time, arcade games were the latest in game technology, but all of that changed in an instant when console games emerged. Now when people talk about video games, it goes without saying that they're talking about console games, as they hold the lion's share of the market.

Compared to the NES era, there have been such major advancements that simply calling it "evolution" might not be enough. It seems like every time the word "next-gen" is used, it has more to do with "mutations" in the industry. Visual technologies have evolved way too fast, so we are almost at the critical point where it's very difficult to surprise people only by what they see. But even in this situation, Nintendo DS and Wii caused another mutation with new stimulus: "touch." I think that the video game industry progresses when revolutionary technology rides the wave of the day.

I see a very close link between the growth of console machines and the explosive expansion of the Western development powers. Western developers who have the power to create these new technologies have all the power of that technology at their disposal. Obviously Western developers lead in today's game development. So it is a big change for Japanese developers to be following behind the West.

When you were at Capcom, what was the impetus for creating Clover Studio?
I wanted to be in a position to create new intellectual properties and provide excitement and encouragement to players. That was the impetus.

It seems like more and more developers in Japan are going independent (yourself, Yuji Naka, Hironobu Sakaguchi). Why do you think that is, and do you foresee that trend continuing?
The distinction between developer and publisher is less clear in Japan. Usually, major companies do both development and publishing, and there have been many mergers of those companies.

"Game creator" is the person who has his own color, and it's fundamentally impossible to have several creators with their own colors all part of the same major brand. Branding for a major publisher guarantees the stability of the business and branding for a developer guarantees the fan following of the game. This role-sharing will become more apparent in the future, I believe. In this situation, that trend will continue, I think, and it is very natural to see the contents of the game become the main issue.

What lessons did you learn with Clover that you've been able to apply to PlatinumGames?
I learned that I myself have to keep improving.

My aim is the same—to create new IPs—but I realized that I need to try to make them more acceptable to a wider audience. I feel as though my abilities as a producer are being tested every day.

At Clover Studio, experience taught me that both vision and content

GAMEOGRAPHY

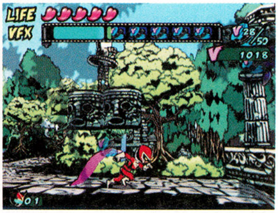
Whether introducing a new brand of superhero, letting players shout "Objection!," or coming packaged with a 40-button controller (plus foot pedals), Inaba's games always fall outside the norm.

1P-0006 HI-0632 T-1850 2P-0000
HELP
PICK PIECE!

SICHUAN II
1993, ARCADE
MAIN PROGRAMMER

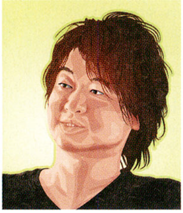
MK21-R
600
300

STEEL BATTALION
2002, XBOX
PRODUCER



VIEWTIFUL JOE
2003, GAMECUBE
PRODUCER

Power Profiles



can pull the market, and so at PlatinumGames I think that I need to become stronger.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of being an independent studio?
Advantages: It's easier to put our color or taste into the game. We can be proud of our own games. Disadvantages: It is difficult to do anything when we are not well-financed.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
When players say, "Hey, this is really fun!" It's the best thing ever.

While many developers continue to crank out sequels and licensed properties, you obviously believe in the importance of original IPs. Do you believe that more in the industry will eventually embrace the need for new ideas, and what do you think it will take for that to happen?
It takes a long time to make a game. A timer starts the moment you enter the game industry, counting down the remaining titles you have in you over the course of your career. Because of this limit I want to be involved in creating as many new things as possible.

New things, by their newness alone, are often very strong. As strong as these titles are, it is that strength which can make them difficult to be accepted.

Of course, as the developer, we can tone it down as much as we want, but that can reduce the impact of the new IP and ultimately makes all games the same. I'm just trying to see that that doesn't happen.

These days, much of the industry seems obsessed with making games increasingly realistic, yet you seem more comfortable working in fantasy worlds. Why is that?
Realism is about photorealism. The closer you get to photorealistic, the more exciting things can become, but I'm not interested in that at all. It really isn't very interesting to just copy reality. I'm not saying that I prefer fantasy settings but that I like an edgier art style.

How do you feel about Nintendo's efforts to expand the video game audience?
With Nintendo DS and Wii, Nintendo has expanded the base of game users wider than the traditional casual gamers, to the people who had no interest in games. Thanks to Nintendo's efforts, having a game machine is now an ordinary thing. It's not a geek thing any more. Games are upgraded as a culture, which is fantastic.

When you or your team are stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
I'd rather closely watch and wait because I believe in their power as a team. When stuck, in most cases it is because team members are lacking objectivity, so quickly sorting out and making choices are the most important things. However, the difficulty here is the balance. Sometimes it's necessary to discard something, but it always causes a shock to the team. If I'm too businesslike about it, they may lose their motivation.

> *"I begged my parents, 'Please buy me a PC, and when I become a game creator and get rich, I can buy you a house and a diamond ring.'"*

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
Big favorites of mine are Fantasy Zone and Wizardry. I went to the arcade to play Fantasy Zone when I was a kid, and I bought the board when I was grown up. I liked it that much. A unique universe, good music, smooth gameplay. I still think it's a great game. I have a special feeling for Wizardry because I played it again and again to death. Also, I like it because no other game can stir the player's imagination like that.

Do you consider video games to be art?
No. Art is not for others. It's for one's own inner world. Games are for others.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
I love novels and comics. My home is full of books. I feel my mind is full with imagination when I'm reading books. From the western novels, I love *Dragonlance*. I'd love to make that game some day.

Talking about movies... I don't watch them that much lately because there are not so many good movies, but my favorite directors are David Fincher and Ridley Scott.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
Riding bicycles. I'm not such a big fan of cars and motorcycles, but bikes are really good. I have three of them now: a Klein road racer, Bianchi MTB, and Panasonic titanium foldable bike. I'll buy a white De Rosa Idol for myself if my PlatinumGames titles become big hits!

If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
The ability to speak and understand all the languages of the world. I'm doing business for the worldwide market, and each day I think more strongly that I want to communicate my own thoughts in the most effective way.

If I could have one more superpower, I'd want the ability to transform into an animal. I'll become a cat and spend my days relaxing in somebody's house.

GAMEOGRAPHY

Phoenix
That question is irrelevant to this case!

PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY
2005, NINTENDO DS
PRODUCER

OKAMI
2006, PLAYSTATION 2
PRODUCER

GOD HAND
2006, PLAYSTATION 2
PRODUCER

COME CHALLENGERS!!
DEATHWATCH
WELCOME CHALLENGERS

MADWORLD
2009, Wii
PRODUCER

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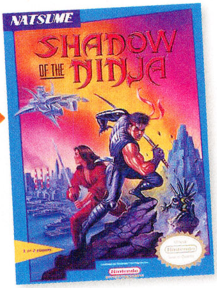
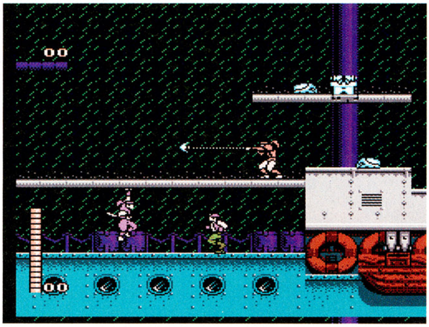
SHADOW OF THE NINJA

Not familiar with this co-op action classic? Ninjas are sneaky like that.



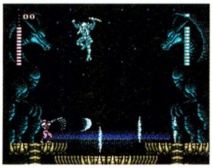
PLATFORM: NES
DEVELOPER: NATSUME
PUBLISHER: NATSUME
RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 1990
COVERED IN ISSUES: 18, 21, 22, 23
FALLS REQUIRED TO KILL A NINJA: 4



One ninja coming after you is bad enough. But two ninjas? Emperor Garuda and his army are in for a world of hurt.

Everyone undoubtedly has their own thoughts on last issue's Best of the Best feature—things they agree with, things they disagree with, furious rage about what was left off the lists (right, EarthBound fans?). For me, one of the key omissions is the NES classic Shadow of the Ninja. Developed and produced by Natsume (before they were synonymous with farming sims), Shadow of the Ninja might not have the name recognition of Ninja Gaiden, but in my opinion it's nearly as good.

Like other ninja games of the era, Shadow of the Ninja wasn't about stealth—it was about pure fast-paced action as you sliced and diced your way through the forces of the evil Emperor Garuda. Dispatching foes with your sword (or kusarigama, if you preferred a weapon that sacrificed speed for range) was immensely satisfying, and agility was just as important as strength; the ability to cling to and traverse ceilings was a gameplay breakthrough in 1990, and it allowed for some creative level designs. As you battled through the game's five sci-fi-tinged stages—a dock, a sewer, a ruined city, an air base, and Garuda's fortress—you could collect power-ups to maximize your offensive strength and you could further enhance your capabilities by acquiring shuriken (which could be upgraded to home in on adversaries) and bombs.



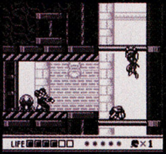
While fighting your way to Garuda on your own was fun, what really made Shadow of the Ninja stand out from similar games was the inclusion of co-op play. With one player controlling blue-clad male ninja Hayate and the other controlling pink-garbed female ninja Kaede (you could select either one in single-player mode), you and a friend could forge a dual-bladed assault to breach the enemies' defenses. Although the added muscle was balanced by a shared continue pool, having an ally at your side was very useful when battling the game's enemy ninjas and cybernetic foes, especially the bosses, which included a giant screen-filling tank, a samurai who could burst into pieces and then re-form, and Emperor Garuda himself (who looked reminiscent of the Predator from the Arnold Schwarzenegger flick).

To top off the excellent action, Shadow of the Ninja looked and sounded great (the yells during your attacks were especially cool), and it controlled incredibly smoothly. In fact, just about every aspect of the game was polished to near-perfection. When it comes to classic ninja games, Shinobi and Ninja Gaiden might get all the attention, but Shadow of the Ninja remains one of the true martial-arts masters. —**CHRIS H.**

Arr! Gimme some ninja booty!

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Although Shadow of the Ninja was a fantastic game, sadly it never received a sequel. There was at least one planned, however: in Nintendo Power Vol. 28 a Game Boy version was shown. Strangely, the game was never published, but much of its content (including a plot about a despotic emperor) was repurposed for Tecmo's **Ninja Gaiden Shadow.** The scene from Vol. 28 appeared in Ninja Gaiden Shadow's second level.



Hopes for a Shadow of the Ninja revival emerged once again in 2001, when Natsume released **Return of the Ninja** for Game Boy Color. Unfortunately, it was unrelated to Shadow of the Ninja (outside of the similar title and plentiful ninja goodness). Return of the Ninja featured a much slower pace, a greater emphasis on stealth, and a much stiffer challenge.

HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback. **nintendopower@futureus.com**

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ROCK THIS Wii

Dream on this, Guitar Hero® fans; make your dreams come true with Guitar Hero®: Aerosmith® for Wii™ and a customized Guitar Hero® wireless controller!

GRAND PRIZE

1 WINNER! Design your own customized Guitar Hero® wireless controller for Wii™ with our design expert then rock out with a copy of Guitar Hero®: Aerosmith® for Wii™, featuring Aerosmith's greatest hits. With your one-of-a-kind axe, you'll hammer down on classic Aerosmith® tunes such as "*Sweet Emotion*," "*Walk This Way*," "*Back in the Saddle*," and "*Dream On*," plus hits from Cheap Trick, Joan Jett, Lenny Kravitz, and other rock stars.

SECOND PRIZE

10 WINNERS! Score your own copy of Guitar Hero®: Aerosmith® for Wii™ and a limited Guitar Hero® wireless controller Aerosmith® faceplate (available only in a special edition bundle unless you're one of our second prize winners!) and experience the sweet emotions of rockdom.

TO ENTER: Send us a postcard listing your full name, mailing address, phone number, and email address (if you have one). Address it as follows:

Nintendo Power Sweepstakes V. 232
c/o Future US
1000 Marina Blvd., STE 510
Brisbane, CA 94005

OFFICIAL RULES

1. No purchase is necessary to win and as a contestant you have not yet won. Entries must be received no later than October 1, 2008. The winners will be chosen on or about October 17, 2008, and will be notified by e-mail (or regular mail). The odds of winning depend upon the number of entries received. The sponsor of the contest is Future US, Inc. ("Future US"), 1000 Marina Blvd., STE 510 Brisbane, CA 94005. Future US cannot be responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or incomplete entries, nor shall it be liable for unsuccessful efforts to notify a winner.

2. The prizes are the following: The prize that is available for one (1) contestant is one Guitar Hero®: Aerosmith® (of which the MSRP is $49.99), one Wii™ Guitar Hero® Wireless Guitar from Activision (of which the MSRP is $59.99). The prize that is available for ten (10) contestants is one (1) Guitar Hero®: Aerosmith® (of which the MSRP is $49.99). The prizes are nontransferable and no substitutions will be allowed.

3. Winners will be determined by a single random drawing of all valid entries and the decision of Future US shall be final. You may obtain the name of the winner by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the address above. Future US reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to cancel or suspend this drawing should causes beyond its control corrupt the administration, security, or proper play of the drawing.

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5. Entrants must be at least 13 years of age. If a winner is a minor, the prize will be awarded in the name of the winner's parent or legal guardian, who is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state and local taxes, and that winner must also provide a signed parental or guardian consent form, provided by the sponsor, within 7 days of notification attempt. Failure of the minor to return the guardian consent form will result in the forfeiture of the prize and selection of an alternate winner, who will be chosen through a random drawing from the remaining eligible entries.

6. Return of any prize or prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected.

7. The winners may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within seven days of receipt; failure to do so upon request will result in forfeiture of the prize. By acceptance of the prize, the winners agree to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Winners are responsible for paying any income taxes on the value of the prize received.

8. Future US is not responsible for any damages or expenses that winners might incur as a result of this contest or the receipt of any prize. In addition, contestants release and hold Future US and its employees harmless from any and all damages and claims of any kind in connection with the contest. Future US reserves the right to confirm all winners for eligibility and compliance with the rules and regulations.

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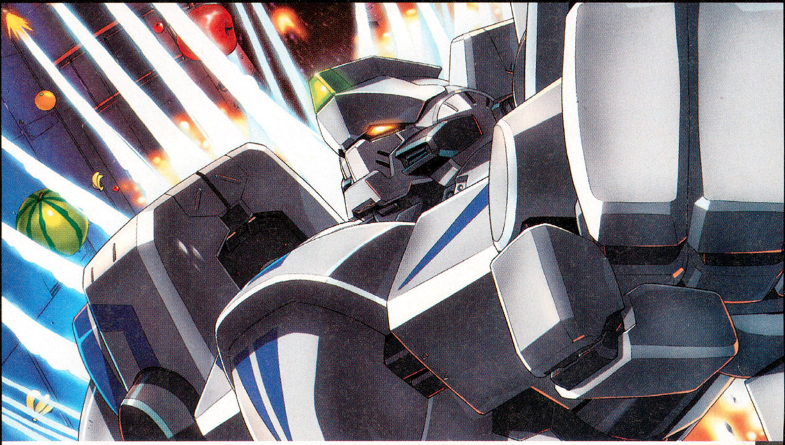
11. A contestant may enter by printing their name, address, daytime telephone number and e-mail address (if they have one) and the name of the prize drawing on a 3x5 card and mailing it to: Nintendo Power Sweepstakes V. 232, c/o Future US, 1000 Marina Blvd., STE 510 Brisbane, CA 94005. Only one entry per person will be accepted.

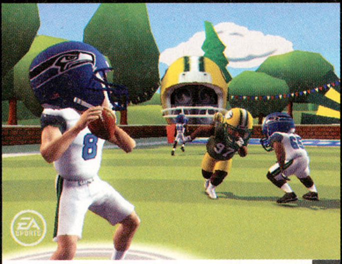
REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

Big robots, fruit, and a million-bajillion missiles—what's not to love about Bangai-O Spirits?



BANGAI-O SPIRITS 84



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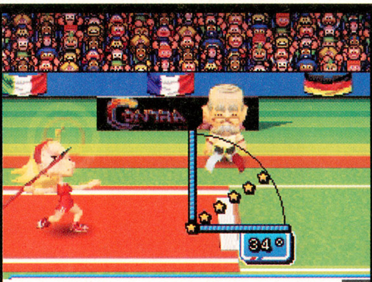
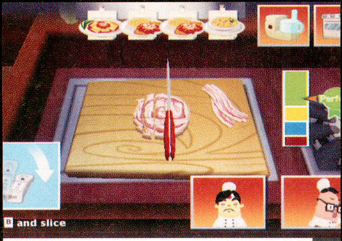


NEW INTERNATIONAL TRACK AND FIELD 87



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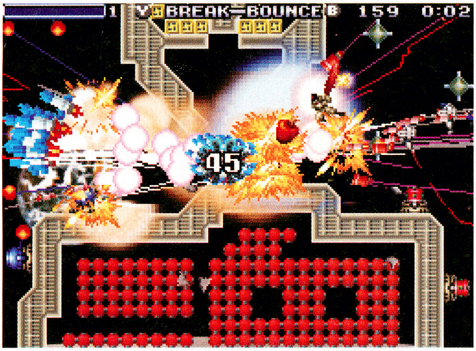
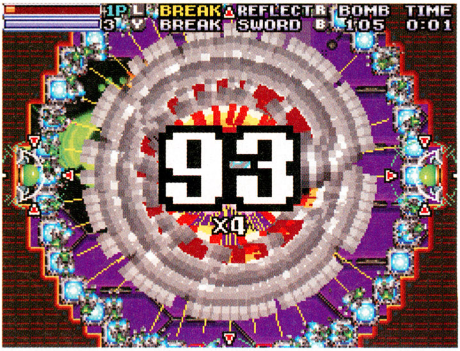




Community Spirits

BANGAI-O SPIRITS

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **DS**

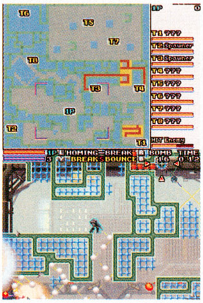
PUBLISHER: **D3PA**

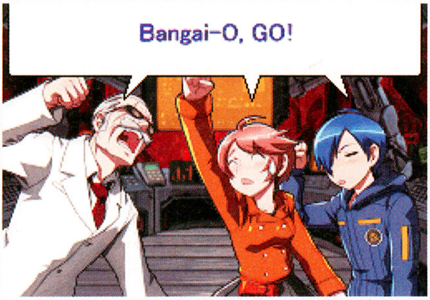
DEVELOPER: **TREASURE**

ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

It really means something to say that Bangai-O Spirits is the strangest game that notoriously quirky developer Treasure has ever made. It's best described as a puzzle game that requires shooter-style reflexes, but even that explanation fails to describe the game's wide range of experiences, which include everything from straight shooter levels to block puzzles to foot races to boss rushes. Many stages seem brutally difficult at first, but once you figure out what weapons to use and how to approach each target, trying to execute a clever plan from within a sea of bullets becomes an addictive challenge.

The titular Bangai-O is a giant robot who can fly, charge at foes, and equip four weapons from an arsenal that includes everything from homing missiles to a baseball bat. The controls take a lot of getting used to, but a 17-stage tutorial will walk you through it, complete with humorous intermissions that openly mock the game's complicated mechanics. Sadly, that 20-minute tutorial is the closest thing that Bangai-O Spirits has to a story mode—after you complete it, the story ends, the credits roll, and you're on your own to select from 167 levels that have been loosely grouped into four categories. They're a scattershot bunch; some are challenging and well-crafted while others are frustrating exercises in trial and error that cannot be beaten without a specific assortment of weapons. You can play the levels in any order and skip any of the ones you don't like, since beating them accomplishes nothing more than the game recording your high score. The lack of any sort of structure or ending makes for a somewhat unsatisfying single-player experience, especially compared to the more traditional campaigns in past versions of Bangai-O.





Still, 167 stages is nothing to sneeze at. And should you ever tire of Treasure's creations, you can make levels of your own or modify the premade ones with the game's surprisingly intuitive level editor. Once you've completed a level, you can share it in a very novel way—by converting it into a sound file and uploading it to a website, e-mailing it to a friend, or playing it into the microphone of a friend's DS. Uploading takes a bit of effort because you'll need a sound-recording program and a headphone-jack cable, but downloading stages is as simple as plugging headphones into your computer and placing an ear bud on the DS microphone. The Internet is already awash with fan-made Bangai-O stages from the Japanese release, and quite a few of them are more interesting than even the developer's own efforts.

Bangai-O Spirits is, above all, an excellent community game. In addition to the ability to make and share stages freely online, you can have a blast comparing game films of speed runs (which can be transferred in a similar fashion to the stages) or challenging the standard stages in wireless co-op with up to three friends (each of whom must own their own copy of the game). Those looking to enjoy the game as a community of one probably shouldn't bother; Bangai-O Spirits is for those who are willing to spend a lazy afternoon downloading stages made by online strangers and repaying them with films of their speed runs, or re-creating classic Legend of Zelda dungeons as Bangai-O levels and throwing them online for others to enjoy. That sort of thing is easier than you think it'll be, and considerably more fun.

—CASEY L.

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHEN HAVE YOU GOTTEN EMOTIONAL PLAYING A NINTENDO GAME?

Justin Cheng

When Kefka poisons Doma Castle's water in Final Fantasy VI (III on SNES), I felt both sadness at all the people's deaths and anger at Kefka.

Chris Hoffman

I admit, I start to well up every time I get to the part in Elite Beat Agents about the little girl losing her father just before Christmas.

Tom Holoien

Most recently, when playing the original Trauma Center on DS. The game requires such precision at times that I want to fling my DS away. (Damn you, Triti!)

Casey Loe

No mere character death could match the emotional impact of guiding Earth through the whole of human history. We need Terranigma on VC now!

Chris Shepperd

When I finally beat Ghosts 'n Goblins only to find out it was an illusion and I'd have to do it all again. Wait, is uncontrollable anger considered getting emotional?

George Sinfield

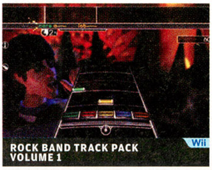
After defeating Ganon the first time; partly because it took so long to accomplish, partly because I knew the second quest was ahead of me.

Chris Slate

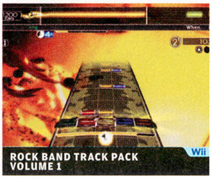
I didn't cry or anything, but I did find Rosalina's story in Super Mario Galaxy to be very sweet and touching, with its melancholy storybook presentation.

Steve Thomason

Words cannot express the endless joy I felt this month while turning the Packers' defense into swiss cheese with Adrian Peterson. Praise Purple Jesus!



ROCK BAND TRACK PACK VOLUME 1



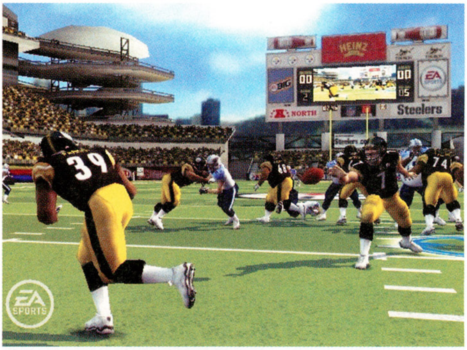
ROCK BAND TRACK PACK VOLUME 1

ROCK BAND TRACK PACK: VOLUME 1

RATING: 6.5
PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: MTV GAMES
DEVELOPER: PI STUDIOS
ESRB: TEEN

Though there are a few songs I like in Rock Band Track Pack: Volume 1, like Boston's "More Than a Feeling" and Weezer's "Buddy Holly," I probably wouldn't pick many of them if given the ability to download any 20 songs from the over 150-plus currently available as downloadable content for other systems. These songs are old news to people with other versions of the game—the most recent was released in late March as DLC—and the Track Pack is a stand-alone game that does not interface with Rock Band at all, meaning you're basically paying $30 for a 20-song version of the original game. While the price is lower than the $40 you'd pay to download these songs, the lack of choice means that if you don't like the majority of the tracks in the game, you won't be getting your money's worth.

All that aside, the Track Pack is more Rock Band, and if you like the songs you'll have just as much fun as you did playing the original. Bottom line: check the track list before you buy. **—TOM H.**



Ready for Primetime

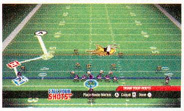
MADDEN NFL 09 ALL-PLAY

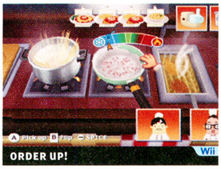
RATING: 9.0
PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER: EA TIBURON
ESRB: EVERYONE

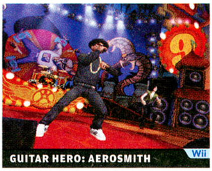
Don't let the All-Play moniker fool you. While EA is making a conscious effort to have all of its Wii sports titles be more appealing to the casual audience, Madden remains first and foremost a hardcore football sim. And the good news for my fellow devotees of the sport is that this year's version improves on its predecessor in almost every way. The motion controls have been refined and feel much more responsive (particularly passing), the game looks significantly better thanks to some fantastic lighting, and I love the new passing icons that give you the green light when a receiver is open. Easily the best new addition, however, is Call Your Shot, which allows you to draw your own receiver routes prior to the snap using the Wii remote. It's a brilliant idea, masterfully implemented, that provides limitless opportunities to customize your playbook. In a matter of seconds, you can redesign a play from the ground up or just extend that hook route an extra couple of yards to get past the first-down marker.

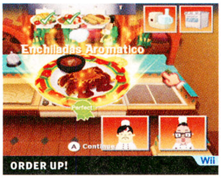
As for the much-ballyhooed All-Play mode, it may provide some help to beginners, but I doubt it's going to carry a wave of Wii Sports casuals into the Madden Nation. Though it simplifies the controls, it can't change the fact that football is a very complicated, fast-moving sport. All-Play or no, there's a certain level of dedication required to learn how to play. The new five-on-five mode pares things down, but its vanilla execution just isn't much fun.

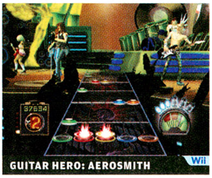
So while EA may not have lived up to its marketing directive, it's succeeded in creating quite possibly the best, most fully featured sports sim available on Wii. As a lifelong Vikings fan, my biggest complaint is that I have to buy a game with Brett Favre on the cover. **—STEVE T.**

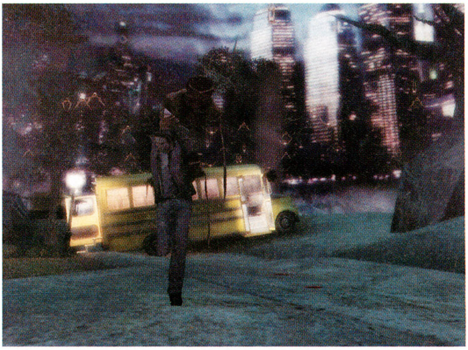












ORDER UP!

RATING: 7.0
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ZOO GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **SUPERVILLAIN STUDIOS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Remember the movie *Ratatouille*? With the quirky chefs and the frantic kitchen activity and the evil food critic and the pesky health inspector? Order Up! is a lot like that—only with less lovable vermin. Actually, you do have to eliminate the occasional rodent infestation, as well as clean dishes, hire assistants, buy spices, sharpen knives, and more; it's a complete cooking-game experience. Preparing a variety of dishes via solid, mostly responsive Cooking Mama-style motion-based activities (chopping, slicing, grilling, grating, mashing, stirring, sautéing, and more) is at the heart of Order Up!, but the game takes things a few steps further by letting you cook multiple items simultaneously and implementing a satisfying sense of progression that lets you expand into new restaurants and unlock new recipes as you rake in the cash from customers. It's not particularly challenging (you can't really lose), and there is some repetition as you prepare the same dishes over and over before you expand your menu, but there's plenty to do and it's seasoned with movie-quality voice acting and plenty of quirky charm; the final stage, an Iron Chef-style showdown, is especially amusing. Not everything is perfect, though. Occasionally pop-up windows interfered with my ability to cook, and the back-and-forth slicing motion gave me a lot of trouble, but I still had plenty of fun. Order Up! might not be a five-star restaurant, but it still serves up a hearty meal. —**CHRIS H.**

GUITAR HERO: AEROSMITH

RATING: 7.0
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **REDOCTANE**
DEVELOPER: **VICARIOUS VISIONS**
ESRB: **TEEN**

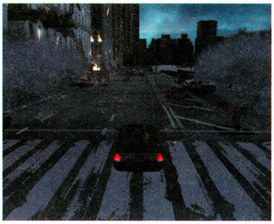
An Aerosmith-centric Guitar Hero is certainly an interesting experiment, but, not surprisingly, your enjoyment of Guitar Hero: Aerosmith obviously relies almost entirely on your liking the band. Aerosmith saturates everything, from the interviews with the band members to the stages to the track list (though there are some non-Aerosmith songs, too). As a game it's fun enough; it retains all of the features from the Wii version of Guitar Hero III, giving you plenty of reason to buy it if you're an Aerosmith fan. If you're not, however, there's little for you here, especially with its $50 price tag (that's for the game by itself, sans the guitar controller)—that's a steep price to pay if you want to play only a handful of the songs.
—**JUSTIN C.**

Leave it Alone

ALONE IN THE DARK

RATING: 4.0
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ATARI**
DEVELOPER: **HYDRAVISION**
ESRB: **MATURE**

It was so promising, this new Alone in the Dark—it was going to be an episodic, cinematic adventure filled with cliffhangers and thrills. What we got was a rather disappointing, lackluster attempt. The developers had good ideas, but failed to execute them well. Take the controls, for example: yes, driving by using the nunchuk and remote as nine o'clock and three o'clock on a steering wheel is pretty unique, but in practice it leads to some of the most annoying driving in gaming. Add the fact that you're trying to speed away from certain doom (you'll die from one touch if whatever it is you're running from—a giant fissure, alchemists in a car—catches up with you, often because you accidentally run into some sort of obstruction), and you have the recipe for hair-pulling frustration as you restart time and again. (When the frustration reaches fever pitch, it's tempting to skip past these parts; you can skip to any chapter at any time from the main menu.) Outside of the vehicle segments, the controls are better—in particular, the first-person shooting works pretty well. The only major annoyance is trying to open the inventory by twisting the nunchuk and remote outward while having a gun equipped in the first-person view, which often caused me to check my gun's ammo instead. Unfortunately, the story isn't very engaging (partially due to the poor voice acting), and there are some AI problems (some enemies just stand in place). It's a shame—the basic concepts are sound, but the execution should have been much better.
—**JUSTIN C.**



GUITAR HERO: ON TOUR

DS

GUITAR HERO: ON TOUR

DS

NEW INTERNATIONAL TRACK AND FIELD

DS

GUITAR HERO: ON TOUR

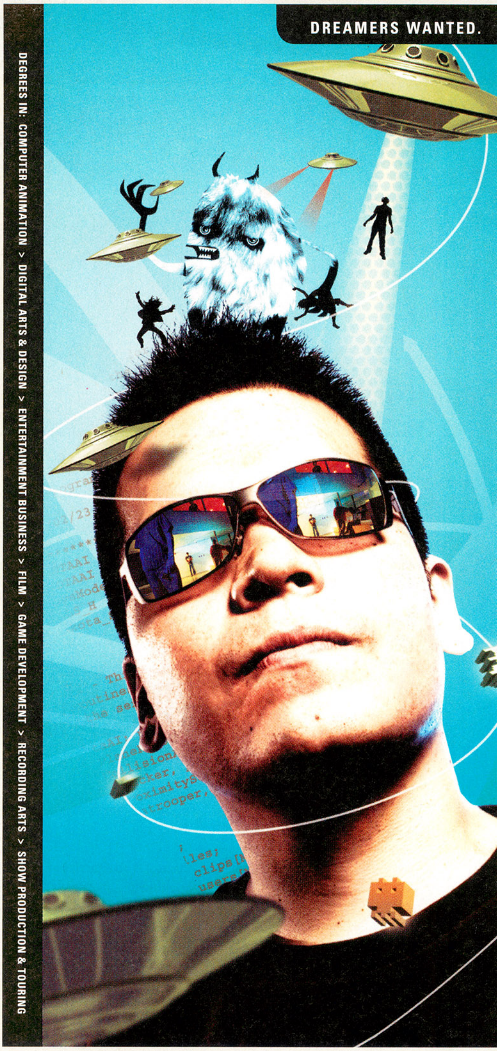
RATING: 8.0
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **REDOCTANE**
DEVELOPER: **VICARIOUS VISIONS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

As a Guitar Hero fan, I was feeling a tinge of sadness that the franchise was starting to feel a little stale. That's why Guitar Hero: On Tour is so exciting—it's Guitar Hero on the go, played a bit differently, with more emphasis on picking than on fretwork (though there's still plenty of that). Sure, it has only 25 hit-and-miss tracks and the Guitar Grip controller has a mere four buttons, but the game as a whole works well. The only issue was playing for long periods—my hand started to feel a bit of strain from holding the Guitar Grip and trying to shift my fingers across the fret buttons out of habit (it didn't work; my hand was locked into place thanks to the Guitar Grip's strap). But since the game is playable in short bursts—as long as a song, really—it wasn't a big issue. Plus, the multiplayer capability compensates for a lot of the game's flaws. There are the standard Face-off and Co-op modes, but I liked the new Guitar Duel mode best (it's essentially like the Battle mode from Guitar Hero III). Sure, it goes against what the game's about—playing a song well—focusing instead on throwing as many attacks at your opponent as possible, but the mode makes good use of the DS's touch screen and mic. —**JUSTIN C.**

NEW INTERNATIONAL TRACK AND FIELD

RATING: 8.0
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **SUMO DIGITAL**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Running and jumping with all of the bells and whistles—that describes New International Track and Field, which marks Konami's personal best in the summer-games arena. Though stylus strokes have replaced button presses for basic control, longtime fans of the series will be able to jump into the game's 24 events with minimal tutorial browsing. The events share a handful of control schemes, which makes play intuitive but offers little distinction between exercises such as javelin, shot put, and long jump. Skeet shooting uses the touch screen effectively for targeting, but 110m hurdles requires too much stylus precision to coordinate your actions. Multiplayer options include single-card play and the ability to share your accomplishments via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. Unlockables (such as special events featuring established Konami characters) will keep you slicing and tapping well into the coverage of the Summer Olympics. —**GEORGE S.**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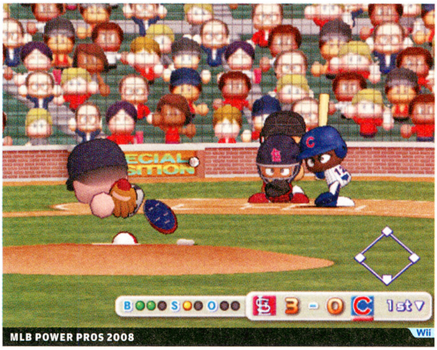
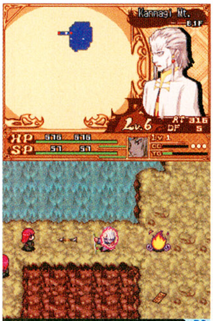


MLB POWER PROS 2008



IZUNA 2: THE UNEMPLOYED NINJA RETURNS

NCAA FOOTBALL 09 ALL-PLAY

Star Player
Wii

LITTLE LEAGUE WORLD SERIES BASEBALL 2008

MLB POWER PROS 2008

RATING: 7.0
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **2K SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **KONAMI**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

It's getting a bit of a late start considering we're already more than halfway through the 2008 season, but MLB Power Pros is the best baseball game you'll find on Wii. Whether you dig the cute, squatty characters is a matter of personal preference, but there's no denying the game's impressive depth. It boasts a staggering number of game modes, offers copious stat-tracking, and lets you manage every aspect of your team, right down to the practice regimen for individual players. New for this year's version is MLB Life, which offers many of the same RPG trappings as the ever-popular Success mode but cuts down on the cornball story elements and follows your player's big-league career rather than his journey through the farm system. It's incredibly addictive, and the fact that games fast-forward to your guy's own plate appearances keeps things moving at a nice, brisk pace.

Power Pros still has room for improvement, though, particularly when it comes to the action on the field. There are some niggling annoyances that will drive hardcore baseball fans nuts (like an overabundance of passed balls), and fielding just doesn't feel as responsive as it should. It's also worth noting that the game offers motion controls during only the Home Run Derby; everything else is limited to old-fashioned button presses and Control Stick movements. That's fine by me, but those who want a more physically immersive experience will have to look elsewhere. **—STEVE T.**

IZUNA 2: THE UNEMPLOYED NINJA RETURNS

RATING: 5.0
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **SUCCESS/NINJA STUDIO**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Izuna 2 is an exercise in frustration management. You're expected to fail a *lot*, and knowing that the next time you enter a dungeon you're highly unlikely to survive really tests your will to keep playing. Your only hope is to kill a few monsters, gain some levels, and repeat the process until you can make it all the way through, eschewing any strategy for brute force. At least the action is fun when you have the right items and weapons, but limited inventory space means spending a ton of time making decisions about what to throw away. And without any touch-screen controls, all this menu work is terribly tedious, only adding to the frustration you're feeling from the actual game. A lack of character stats to cling to makes predicting your fate all the more difficult and leaves the RPG elements feeling rather bare-bones. Character development can be a pain, too—even though you gain the ability to bring two characters into a dungeon at once a ways into the game, only the main character earns experience; to have a formidable team, you must haul weaker characters through early dungeons over and over again until they can pull their weight. The story rambles along enough to tie the dungeons together, but you're better off just looking away to avoid the out-of-place playground humor that pervades every conversation. **—CHRIS SH.**

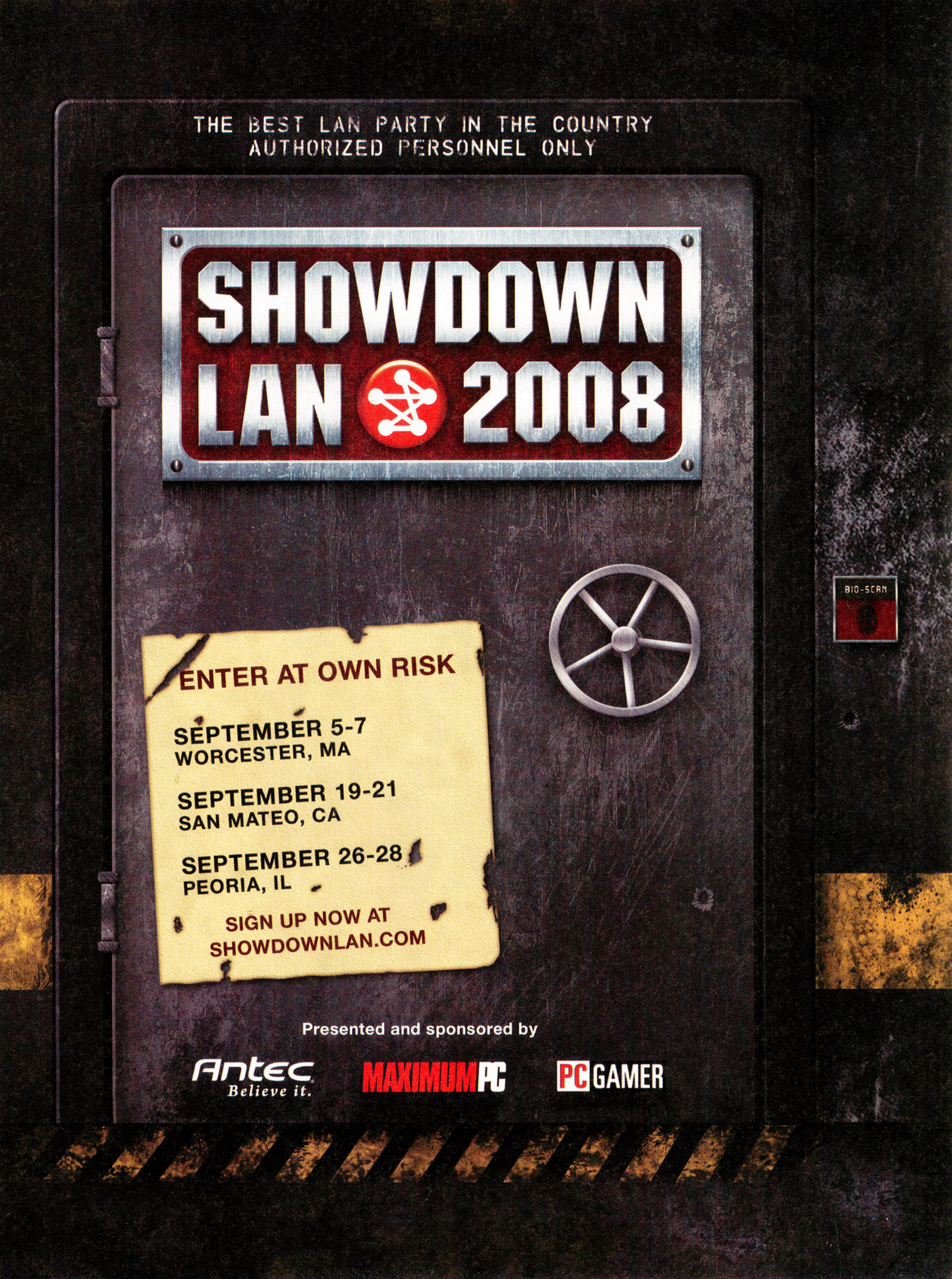
NCAA FOOTBALL 09 ALL-PLAY

RATING: 5.0
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA CANADA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

All the hype of the new NCAA football game from EA Sports seemed almost too good to be true, and we've learned that our instincts were right, unfortunately. The focus of this year's title is on All-Play, a system that lets people of all skill levels play against each other competitively by paring down the controls and adjusting the rules. It doesn't work well enough—good players still blast worse ones off the field, and the supposedly simplified, context-specific gesture controls aren't all that intuitive. Outside of All-Play, the full set of controls, including gestures for actions such as hiking and throwing the ball, aren't any less complex than a traditional control scheme. In other aspects the game looks to have taken steps backward from previous versions. For example, the play-selection screens aren't organized intuitively, and they're difficult to navigate via the nunchuk's Control Stick. And while we're prepared to make graphical concessions compared to more-powerful consoles, the game just looks bland—it seems that the effort to create a stylized look has only made the players and stadiums feel generic. And the high-profile inclusion of the mascot mode, which replaces all the players on a team with the school's mascot but makes almost no other adaptations, should be a cheat code rather than a touted feature. **—CHRIS SH.**

ALSO THIS MONTH

It's not the majors, but the Wii version of Activision's **Little League World Series Baseball 2008** features intuitive controls and lots of options. Look for a DS version also.... We loved **Madden NFL 09** for Wii; EA has a version coming to DS, too.... The online drawing/sledding phenomenon hits Wii and DS with Genius Products' **Line Rider 2: Unbound**, but the interface needed fixing the last time we saw it.... Get your sleuth on through nine chapters of Majesco's **Nancy Drew: The Mystery of the Clue Bender Society** for DS.



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[REVIEWS ARCHIVE]

Highs and Lows

Last issue was full of good-to-great games, with the standouts being Final Fantasy IV (9.0) and Trauma Center: Under the Knife 2 (8.5) on DS, and We Love Golf! (8.5) and Rock Band (8.0) on Wii. Of course, it wasn't a perfect month, but is there ever? Sadly, there were a handful of games that we couldn't review because we didn't get the games in time; look for the reviews of these titles in this very issue.

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.
• INDICATES WI-FI COMPATIBLE

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Alvin and the Chipmunks	N/A	Brash	224	E
Backyard Baseball '09	N/A	Atari	231	E
Baroque	3.0	Atlus	227	T
• Battalion Wars 2	7.5	Nintendo	222	T
Battle of the Bands	7.0	THQ	228	T
Ben 10: Protector of Earth	N/A	D3PA	223	E10+
Blast Works: Build, Trade, Destroy	8.5	Majesco	229	E
Bleach: Shattered Blade	N/A	Sega	222	T
Bomberman Land	5.0	Hudson	226	E
Boom Blox	8.0	Electronic Arts	229	E
Bully: Scholarship Edition	8.5	Rockstar	227	T
Castle of Shikigami III	7.0	Aksys	228	T
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	N/A	Disney Interactive	229	T
Code Lyoko: Quest for Infinity	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E10+
Cranium Kabookii	N/A	Ubisoft	224	E
Crash of the Titans	6.5	Sierra	221	E10+
Cruis'n	N/A	Midway	224	E
CSI: Hard Evidence	N/A	Ubisoft	225	M
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party	8.0	Konami	221	E10+
Death Jr.: Root of Evil	7.0	Eidos	230	T
Deca Sports	N/A	Hudson	229	E
Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed	7.0	THQ	227	T
• Dewy's Adventure	7.0	Konami	221	E
Donkey Kong: Barrel Blast	6.5	Nintendo	221	E
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 3	N/A	Atari	223	T
Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors	7.0	Square Enix	226	T
Dream Pinball 3D	N/A	Southpeak	228	E10+
Emergency Heroes	N/A	Ubisoft	230	E10+
Emergency Mayhem	N/A	Codemasters	228	T
• Endless Ocean	7.5	Nintendo	225	E
• FIFA 08	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo's Dungeon	7.5	Square Enix	231	E10+
Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn	9.5	Nintendo	222	E10+
Furu Furu Park	N/A	Majesco	225	T
Game Party	N/A	Midway	224	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	8.0	Sierra	222	E
• Ghost Squad	7.0	Sega	223	T
Godzilla Unleashed	5.5	Atari	223	E10+
The Golden Compass	4.0	Sega	224	E10+
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core	8.0	Aksys Games	222	T
• Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock	9.0	Activision	222	T
Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law	6.5	Capcom	224	T
High School Musical: Sing It!	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
The House of the Dead 2 & 3 Return	7.0	Sega	227	M
The Incredible Hulk	3.5	Sega	231	T
Indoor Sports	N/A	Konami	223	E
Indy 500 Legends	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Iron Man	5.5	Sega	229	T
Jenga	N/A	Atari	223	E
Jumper	N/A	Brash	226	T
Karaoke Revolution Presents American Idol Encore	N/A	Konami	226	E
Kawasaki Quad Bikes	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Kidz Sports: Basketball	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Kidz Sports: Ice Hockey	N/A	Destineer	225	E
Kung Fu Panda	N/A	Activision	230	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	7.5	LucasArts	230	E10+
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Link's Crossbow Training	6.5	Nintendo	223	T
Looney Tunes: Acme Arsenal	3.5	WB Games	221	E10+
Manhunt 2	7.5	Rockstar Games	223	M
• Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	7.5	Sega	223	E
• Mario Kart Wii	9.0	Nintendo	228	E
• Medal of Honor Heroes 2	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Mercury Meltdown Revolution	6.0	Ignition	221	E
MiniCopter: Adventure Flight	6.5	Aksys	228	E
MLB 2K8	6.5	2K Sports	227	E
MLB Power Pros	6.5	2K Sports	222	E
• MX vs. ATV Untamed	6.0	THQ	224	E
My Horse and Me	N/A	Atari	225	E
My Word Coach	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E
MySims	7.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
Namco Museum Remix	N/A	Namco Bandai	222	E
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	T
Need For Speed ProStreet	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	E10+
Nicktoons: Attack of the Toybots	N/A	THQ	223	E
• NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams	9.0	Sega	224	E
Ninja Reflex	N/A	Electronic Arts	227	E10+
• Nitro Bike	3.5	Ubisoft	225	E10+
No More Heroes	8.0	Ubisoft	226	M
Obscure: The Aftermath	7.0	Ignition	227	M
Octomania	N/A	Conspiracy	227	E
Okami	7.5	Capcom	228	T
One Piece: Unlimited Adventure	6.5	Namco Bandai	225	T
Opoona	7.0	Koei	227	E10+
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection	7.5	Crave	227	E10+
• Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	N/A	Konami	227	E
Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords	N/A	D3PA	224	E10+
• Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	6.5	Ubisoft	223	E10+
Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	223	M
Rock Band	8.0	MTV Games	231	T
Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis	N/A	Rockstar	222	E
Samurai Warriors: Katana	7.5	Koei	224	T
Sega Bass Fishing	5.0	Sega	227	E
Sega Superstars Tennis	8.0	Sega	227	E10+
Showtime Championship Boxing	N/A	Jack of All Games	224	E10+
The Simpsons Game	4.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Smarty Pants	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
• Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity	7.0	Sega	225	E
Soulcalibur Legends	6.5	Namco Bandai	223	T
Space Chimps	N/A	Brash	231	E10+
Speed Racer	N/A	Warner Bros. Interactive	229	E
Summer Sports: Paradise Island	3.5	Destineer	228	E
Super Mario Galaxy	9.5	Nintendo	223	E
• Super Smash Bros. Brawl	10	Nintendo	226	T
Super Swing Golf Season 2	6.5	Tecmo	224	E10+
Target: Terror	N/A	Konami	227	M
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
Tomb Raider Anniversary	6.5	Eidos	223	T
Top Spin 3	7.0	2K Sports	229	E
Trauma Center: New Blood	8.0	Atlus	223	T
Victorious Boxers: Revolution	N/A	XSEED	222	T
WALL*E	N/A	THQ	231	E
• We Love Golf!	8.5	Capcom	231	E10+
We Ski	6.0	Namco Bandai	229	E
Wild Earth: African Safari	N/A	Majesco	228	E
Worms: A Space Oddity	6.0	THQ	227	E10+
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	6.5	THQ	222	T

REVIEWER NOTES

ROCK BAND

I've been reluctant to join the music game craze, but Justin recently let me join his Wii Rock Band, and I have to admit, it's an absolute blast. Since I'm quite possibly the least musically inclined primate on Earth, I'm usually relegated to bass, so I can't really comment on the drums or, God forbid, the singing. But I love the cooperative aspect, and I'm perfectly content with my role...for now.
—STEVE T.

KUNG FU PANDA (DS)

I honestly wasn't expecting much from this DS title, but I was pleasantly surprised at the game's Metroid-esque structure and stylus-heavy gameplay. The controls aren't perfect, but the game as a whole is still pretty fun.

—JUSTIN C.

LEGO INDIANA JONES: THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES (Wii)

Different movie series, same gameplay. If you played the LEGO Star Wars games, you know what you'll be getting with LEGO Indy—clever puzzles, lots of characters, sloppy action, goofy visual gags, and infinite lives so you'll always win. The low challenge makes the game easy to enjoy in co-op with nongamer friends, but it also equates to a low sense of satisfaction. —CHRIS H.

WWII Aces	3.0	Destineer	226	T
Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure	9.0	Capcom	222	E
NINTENDO DS				
• Advance Wars: Days of Ruin	8.5	Nintendo	225	E10+
Alvin and the Chipmunks	N/A	Brash	223	E
American Girl: Julie Finds a Way	N/A	THQ	224	E
Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney	8.0	Capcom	226	T
Are you Smarter Than a 5th Grader?	N/A	THQ	223	E
Arkanoid DS	6.5	Square Enix	230	E
Assassin's Creed: Altair's Chronicles	7.5	Ubisoft	226	T
Balls of Fury	N/A	Destination Software	222	E10+
• Bleach: The Blade of Fate	8.5	Sega	222	T
• Bomberman Land Touch! 2	6.0	Hudson	225	E
Boogie	7.0	Electronic Arts	224	E10+
Brain Challenge	N/A	Ubisoft	225	E
Brain Voyage	N/A	Eidos	228	E
Bratz: Super Babyz	N/A	THQ	226	E
Build-A-Bear Workshop	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E
Cake Mania 2	6.5	Majesco	230	E
Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	N/A	Activision	223	T
Carnival Games	4.5	2K Games	231	E
Chibi-Robo: Park Patrol	8.5	Nintendo	221	E
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	N/A	Disney Interactive	229	E10+
Civilization Revolution	7.5	2K Games	231	E10+
Code Lyoko: Fall of Xana	N/A	The Game Factory	230	E
Commando: Steel Disaster	N/A	XS Games	229	E10+
Contra 4	8.5	Konami	222	T
Corvette Evolution GT	N/A	Jack of All Games	223	E
Cooking Mama 2: Dinner with Friends	7.0	Majesco	223	E
Crosswords DS	N/A	Nintendo	228	E
Dementium: The Ward	8.5	Gamecock	223	M
DK Jungle Climber	8.0	Nintendo	221	E
Draglade	7.5	Atlus	224	E10+
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker	8.0	Square Enix	222	E10+
Drawn to Life	7.5	THQ	221	E
Dream Pinball 3D	N/A	Southpeak	228	E10+
Drone Tactics	7.0	Atlus	229	E10+
Dungeon Explorer: Warriors of Ancient Arts	6.5	Hudson	226	T
Etrian Odyssey II: Heroes of Lagaard	8.5	Atlus	230	E10+
FIFA 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
• Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates	7.0	Square Enix	226	E10+
Final Fantasy IV	9.0	Square Enix	231	E10+
Final Fantasy Tactics A2: Grimoire of the Rift	7.0	Square Enix	230	E10+
Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings	7.5	Square Enix	223	E10+
Front Mission	6.5	Square Enix	222	E10+
Garfield Gets Real	N/A	Destination	223	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	N/A	Sierra	222	E
Godzilla Unleashed: Double Smash	3.0	Atari	224	E
The Golden Compass	N/A	Sega	223	E10+
• GRID	8.5	Codemasters	230	E
Hannah Montana: Music Jam	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
Harvest Moon DS Cute	7.5	Natsume	226	E
Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness	7.0	Natsume	231	E
Homie Rollerz	N/A	Destineer	226	E
Impossible Mission	N/A	Codemasters	223	E
The Incredible Hulk	7.5	Sega	231	E10+
Indy 500 Legends	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Insecticide	6.5	Gamecock	226	E10+
Iron Man	5.0	Sega	229	E10+
Jackass: The Game	N/A	Red Mile Entertainment	225	T
Jake Hunter: Detective Chronicles	5.0	Aksys	229	T
Kung Fu Panda	N/A	Activision	230	E10+
Left Brain, Right Brain	N/A	Majesco	224	E
• The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	9.5	Nintendo	221	E
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	7.5	LucasArts	230	E
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
LifeSigns: Surgical Unit	N/A	Dreamcatcher	223	T
Looney Tunes: Cartoon Conductor	6.5	Eidos	230	E
Looney Tunes: Duck Amuck	3.5	WB Games	221	E
Lost in Blue 3	5.5	Konami	227	E10+
• Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	7.5	Sega	225	E
Mario Party DS	8.0	Nintendo	223	E
Master of Illusion	N/A	Nintendo	223	E
• Mega Man Star Force 2	7.0	Capcom	230	E
Mega Man ZX Advent	8.5	Capcom	222	E10+
Miami Nights: Singles in the City	N/A	Ubisoft	225	T
Mister Slime	6.0	Southpeak	230	E
MLB 2K8 Fantasy All-Stars	6.5	2K Sports	228	E
Monster Jam	N/A	Activision	223	E
The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor	N/A	Vivendi Games	231	T
MX vs. ATV Untamed	6.0	THQ	224	E
My Horse and Me	N/A	Atari	225	E
MySims	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Myst	5.0	Empire Interactive	227	E
Mystery Dungeon: Shiren the Wanderer	6.5	Sega	226	E
• N+	7.0	Atari	228	E
Namco Museum DS	8.0	Namco Bandai	221	E
• Nanostray 2	6.0	Majesco	225	E
Naruto: Ninja Destiny	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	226	T
Naruto: Path of the Ninja	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	E10+
• Need For Speed ProStreet	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword	8.5	Tecmo	227	T
Ninja Reflex	N/A	Electronic Arts	227	E10+
Ontamarama	7.0	Atlus	223	E
Orcs & Elves	5.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Panzer Tactics DS	N/A	Conspiracy	223	E10+
Petz: Bunnyz	N/A	Ubisoft	227	E
Petz Wild Animals: Tigerz	N/A	Ubisoft	227	E
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials and Tribulations	8.5	Capcom	222	T
• Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness	7.5	Nintendo	229	E
• Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Exlporers of Time	7.5	Nintendo	229	E
• Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	N/A	Konami	227	E
• Professor Layton and the Curious Village	8.5	Nintendo	225	E
Puchi Puchi Virus	7.0	NIS America	228	E
Puppy Palace	N/A	Ubisoft	225	E
Puzzle de Harvest Moon	N/A	Natsume	223	E
Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E10+
• River King: Mystic Valley	7.0	Natsume	225	E
Rondo of Swords	6.5	Atlus	228	E10+
Sega Superstars Tennis	8.0	Sega	227	E
The Simpsons Game	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	T
Sonic Rush Adventure	9.0	Sega	221	E
Soul Bubbles	6.5	Eidos	230	E
Space Chimps	N/A	Brash	231	E
Space Invaders Extreme	8.0	Square Enix	230	E
Speed Racer	N/A	Warner Bros. Interactive	229	E
Strawberry Shortcake: 4 Seasons Cake	N/A	Jack of All Games	224	E
Summon Night: Twin Age	7.5	Atlus	229	E10+
Super Dodgeball Brawlers	6.5	Aksys	229	E
Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop 3	N/A	Namco Bandai	230	E
Teenage Zombies: Invasion of the Alien Brain Thingys	7.0	Ignition	228	E10+
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.5	Electronic Arts	221	E
Top Spin 3	6.0	2K Sports	229	E
Touch Detective 2 ½	6.5	Atlus	221	E
Trauma Center: Under the Knife 2	8.5	Atlus	231	T
Ultimate Mortal Kombat	N/A	Midway	223	M
WALL*E	N/A	THQ	231	E
• Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	8.0	THQ	224	T
Wordjong	N/A	Destineer	224	E
• The World Ends With You	9.0	Square Enix	228	T
Worms: Open Warfare 2	7.5	THQ	221	E10+
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	N/A	THQ	222	T
• Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship Tournament 2008	N/A	Konami	224	E
Zoo Tycoon 2 DS	7.0	THQ	226	E

FINAL FANTASY TACTICS A2: GRIMOIRE OF THE RIFT

While Tactics A2 follows the sequel formula of bigger and better with surgical precision, I can't complain too much when the original game is already considered a classic. With almost limitless play potential, a great soundtrack, and enough depth to drown even seasoned strategy players, you could leave this game in your DS until A3 arrives, and still have fun playing it. —KAISER H.

OCTOMANIA

Numerous modes and quirky humor help this simple, fun color-matching game stand out from other puzzle titles. It's a steal at under $20.

—CHRIS H.

NORMAL PICROSS
LEVEL: 1 - A
00:02:51

PICROSS DS

It's been almost a year since its release, and I still haven't gotten tired of Picross DS. It's one of the most original and mind-bending puzzle games I've ever played, and with daily challenges and downloadable content, it never gets old. Whether it's ten minutes or two hours, if I've got time to spare, I'll take Picross DS over any other game available on DS today. —TOM H.

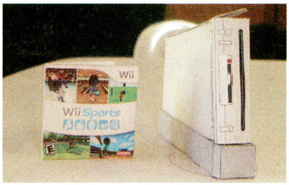
FANDOM

Into the Fold

Papercraft artist Jose Padilla Mundaca brings Nintendo fandom into the third dimension.

People have been making models for centuries from wood, metal, stone, and more. But did you know that around the time of World War II, *paper* models were all the rage? That's right—due to the heavy regulation of resources during the war, people had to find more-available materials to make models with. The resulting creations are commonly called papercraft models.

Papercraft differs from origami in that it uses glue in addition to all the folding and cutting. As you can see from the examples on this page, papercraft models can be fairly simple or incredibly complex. We talked with prolific papercraft modeler—and Nintendo fan—Jose Padilla Mundaca, who lives in Chile. You can see his creations (as well as his builds based on others' templates) on these pages, or you can visit his online gallery at ryo007.deviantart.com. —KAISER H.

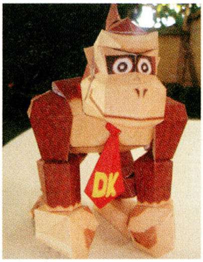


NINTENDO POWER Tell us a little bit about what you do.

JOSE PADILLA MUNDACA I'm 24 years old, and I live in a small town in Chile named Paine. I'm a computer technician right now, but I'm also in my fifth year of computer engineering at UTEM University.

What made you get into papercraft?

About a year ago I downloaded a pack that included a lot of papercraft models because it advertised "Make incredible models from paper!" This and seeing incredibly detailed models of Zelda and Star Wars characters caught my attention, especially Young Link from Ocarina of Time. It seemed really difficult, and I wasn't really good with crafts, but after about a year I decided to try a simple TIE fighter model from *Star Wars*. If I was successful, I would then work my way up to making the Young Link.



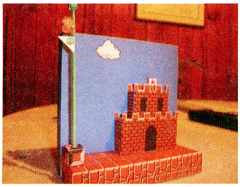
After that, I started Googling "papercrafts," and my eyes were opened to a new world of papercraft. I discovered a lot of creators with incredible designs, and they would share them on the internet for free. It was a hobby and I loved it, and I didn't have money to buy real plastic figures, so this let me assemble all my childhood heroes for cheap.

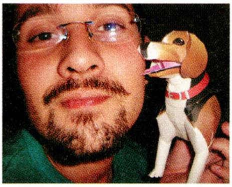
Actually, I still haven't made that Young Link figure, but I plan on it soon. Now it doesn't seem as difficult as it did back when I first started, so I think I can assemble it.

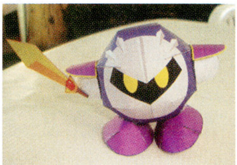
In the last year, I've learned that papercraft is a good way for me to unplug from the rest of the world, relax, get away from my PC, practice my art skills, and keep my mind off of work and other preoccupations.

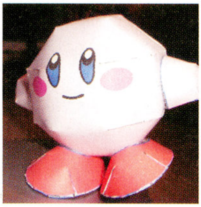
How difficult is it to make some of the figures? We tried a few and they didn't come out very well....

Some figures are a living hell!









[Laughs] Actually the difficulty ranges from beginner-level to only-for-the-ultrapatient-and-skilled. For instance, I could never finish an ultradetailed DeLorean, and I failed at assembling the original *Enterprise* from *Star Trek*.

The secret is to start with simple models with mostly big parts so you can understand how to cut, paste, and fold, and then move on to the more difficult models gradually. When I started my first model, I never believed I could make it because I never had the skills for it. My mom used to help me in school with my art projects and taught me that if at first you don't succeed, don't surrender. Art takes patience and perseverance, and just like everything else in life, practice makes perfect.

How difficult is it to make your own templates? Can you describe the process?

I've made five of my own designs: the Super NES, the Triforce, a Donkey Kong diorama, [the Pokémon] Missingno, and a Mega Man diorama.

My first design, the SNES, was a real challenge. My background in technical drawing was very useful, though. Really, the first step is the idea—what do you want to make. My favorite console ever is the SNES, but I could not find any templates for it. After reading around some forums, I found a program called Pepakura Designer, which takes 3-D models and turns them into papercrafts. Thing is, I don't know how to make 3-D models.

[After] a little more digging around, I found a Google Sketchup gallery that had 3-D models of the SNES [by Nerd Buster], the controller [by Alsomar], and a game cartridge [by Thomas Awadije]. I downloaded the models, converted them to the standard .3ds file format, and opened them in Pepakura Designer. The problem then was that I had no idea how to use the program, and the autotemplate made it very hard. I wanted to make easy models that even a child could make, and I didn't want to have to use a complicated program to make it.

I changed my strategy and used game screenshots, Photoshop, and Paint to edit the images from multiple angles. My technical drawing experience came in handy here because to make the edits, you have to be able to picture how the objects move from 3-D to 2-D. This is how I made the templates easy enough for anyone to make. So in short, I take screenshots from games, and I just imagine how to transform the object from 3-D to 2-D.

If you want to make your own, I recommend using any 3-D program and Pepakura Designer, as these are the basic tools. I do it differently now, using mostly my imagination.

The assembly process is easy and involves just cutting, folding, and pasting. There's really no science involved—just a lot of patience. Some models take me only a couple hours, while others can take weeks or months due to my school schedule.

What are the best materials to use when making a papercraft model?

The material I use is cardboard paper, 110 to 135 pounds (0.16mm to 0.18mm thick). It's more resistant, though you can use any paper you want. Generally the designs are made to be printed on A4-size paper. I also use liquid silicone as my glue, as it dries fast and is really strong. Additionally, I use small scissors with a fine point, though in a few cases I used a knife to make small cuts or folds.

Why do you make so many Nintendo-related papercrafts? Are you a Nintendo fan?

Well, I grew up with Nintendo. My first console was an NES and I mostly played tons of Super Mario Bros. and Kirby. After that I got an SNES and I had a lot more games, like A Link to the Past, Super Mario World, Kirby Super Star, Star Fox, Donkey Kong Country, Killer Instinct, Mortal Kombat, Street Fighter II, and so on and so on. I loved the SNES, and was actually surprised by the quality of the games. Later I got an N64 and played games like Ocarina of Time and Majora's Mask.

In short, I'm a big fan of Nintendo games! I never made it past the N64, though, as I entered school to study computer engineering, and my parents didn't have the money to buy a good computer or a new console. I never had a GameCube, and I wish I could play a Wii, but my career is my priority. But thanks to my computer, I can at least enjoy papercrafts.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Want to make your own papercraft template? Try Google's free 3-D modeling program, Google Sketchup (sketchup.google.com), to create your models. You can also browse the gallery and download other people's designs to play with. Once you have a model you want to use, you can import it into popular papercraft program Pepakura Designer (www.tamasoft.co.jp/pepakura-en). It takes some practice to get right, but keep trying—you'll get it!

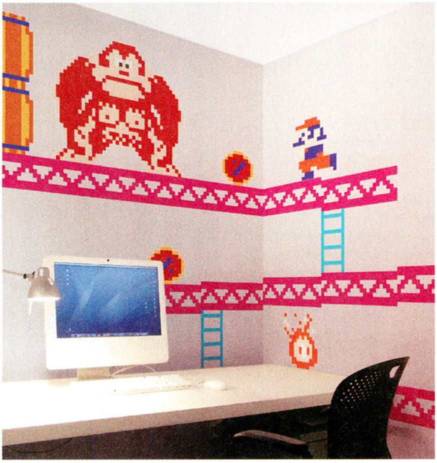
Other Sources of Inspiration

www.nintendopapercraft.com

www.papercraft-world.blogspot.com

paperkraft.blogspot.com

This papercraft Link looks almost like he was taken straight out of Ocarina of Time.



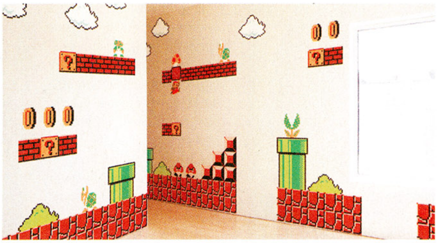
DECORATION

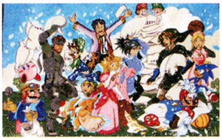
Wall Jump

Wherever you live—a college dorm, a mansion in Beverly Hills, your mom's basement—your home is your castle. And now you've got a way to make it remind you of *Bowser's* castle. Blik, long-time purveyor of large, self-adhesive, removable decals for your wall, is now offering specially made, officially licensed Nintendo sets for budding interior designers.

The three initial designs travel from way old-school to way new-school, depending on your era of inspiration. There's a set from the original Super Mario Bros., another for Donkey Kong (in gloriously hot pink and indigo), and a shiny New Super Mario Bros. collection. Each set comes in pieces, meaning that all the individual "sprites"—the ladders, characters, coins, etc.—can be organized to your liking. Want to pile a bunch of Goombas and blocks into a totem pole? Go for it. You can even mix and match if you buy multiple sets. Just imagine old Mario and Donkey Kong running around in New Super Mario Bros. world. The possibilities are endless, and Blik wants to see your custom images so they can put 'em on their website (www.whatisblik.com/nintendo) to show the world.

The designs can bring a lot of life to a bare white wall, without all the hassle (and commitment) of paint or wallpaper. And they're sorta like creating a virtual (Nintendo-fied) reality in your home. However, despite our intro tease, Bowser's castle isn't ready just yet. Stay tuned—it could be soon, in the Blik of an eye. —**EVAN S.**





FANDOM

Pillow Fight!

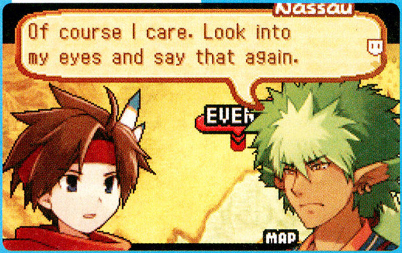
When we play Smash Bros., we like to see our favorite characters "knocking the stuffing out of each other," but reader Crystal Ricalton has a different interpretation of that expression. Crystal sent us a picture of a painting she made that depicts Super Smash Bros. Brawl characters (and a few others) engaging in a heated pillow fight. Crystal tells us, "There were a lot of long hours painting this one." The effort was definitely worth it—we think it's a fantastic piece of art. —**TOM H.**

WRITE YOUR OWN CAPTION

Screen Test

We were hungry for captions, and you readers delivered. Check out your best Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed captions below. This month, we're getting serious. How serious? Look into our eyes. Really look. Are you looking? Good. Now send your best captions to screentest@futureus.com. (You can stop looking now.)

THIS MONTH'S SHOT



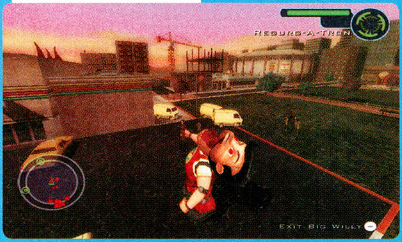
Nassau

Of course I care. Look into my eyes and say that again.

"Last time I looked into your eyes I got this goofy haircut."

HERE'S OUR CAPTION. Think you can do better?

VOLUME 230'S SHOT



"Big Willy wanted to be a real boy, and since wishing on a star didn't work, he decided to listen to the old saying 'you are what you eat.'" —**MIKE S.**

"After eating their first few victims, the aliens knew they should've gotten Big Willy an extended warranty." —**LF**

"And then the giant robot pigeon flew overhead." —**BLACKCAT12**

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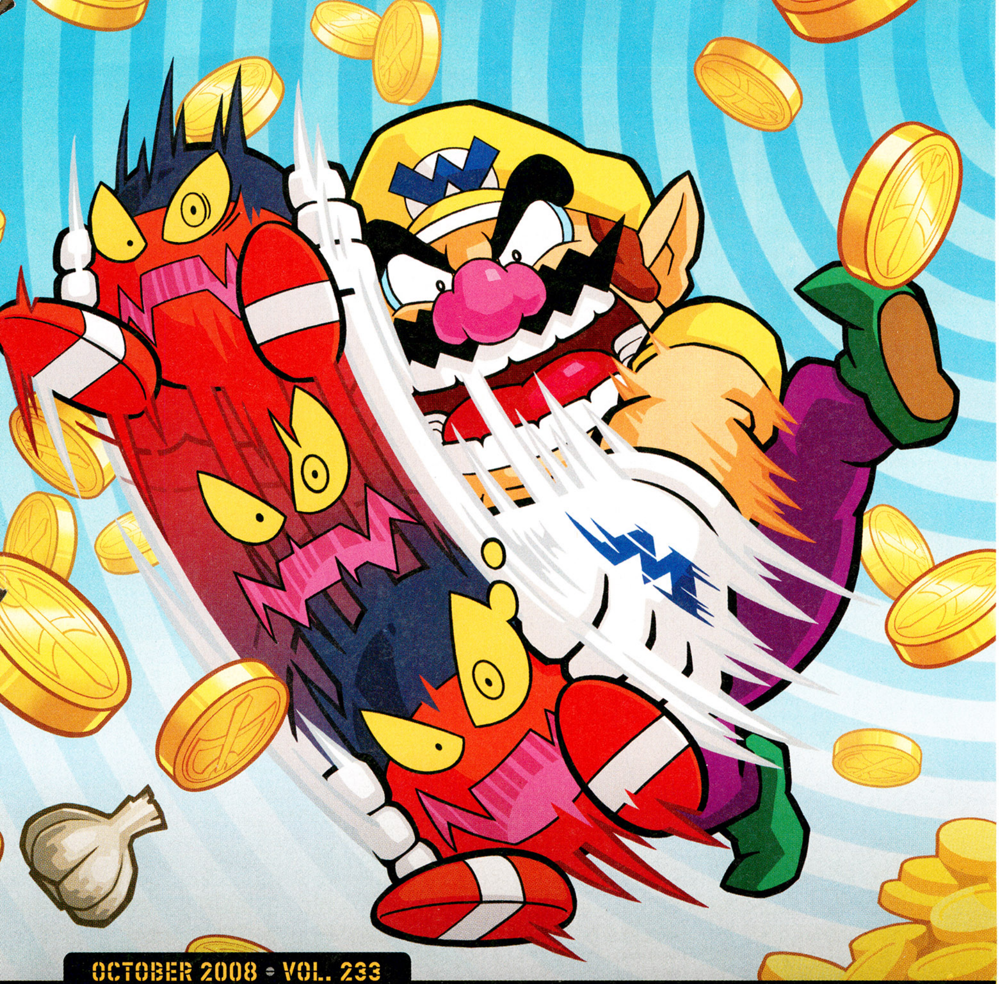

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NEXT MONTH

We'll have an in-depth look at Wario Land: Shake It! and detailed coverage of all the big new games unveiled at E3. Plus, you'll get an exclusive look at a hot new title that *didn't* appear at the show. Please look forward to it!

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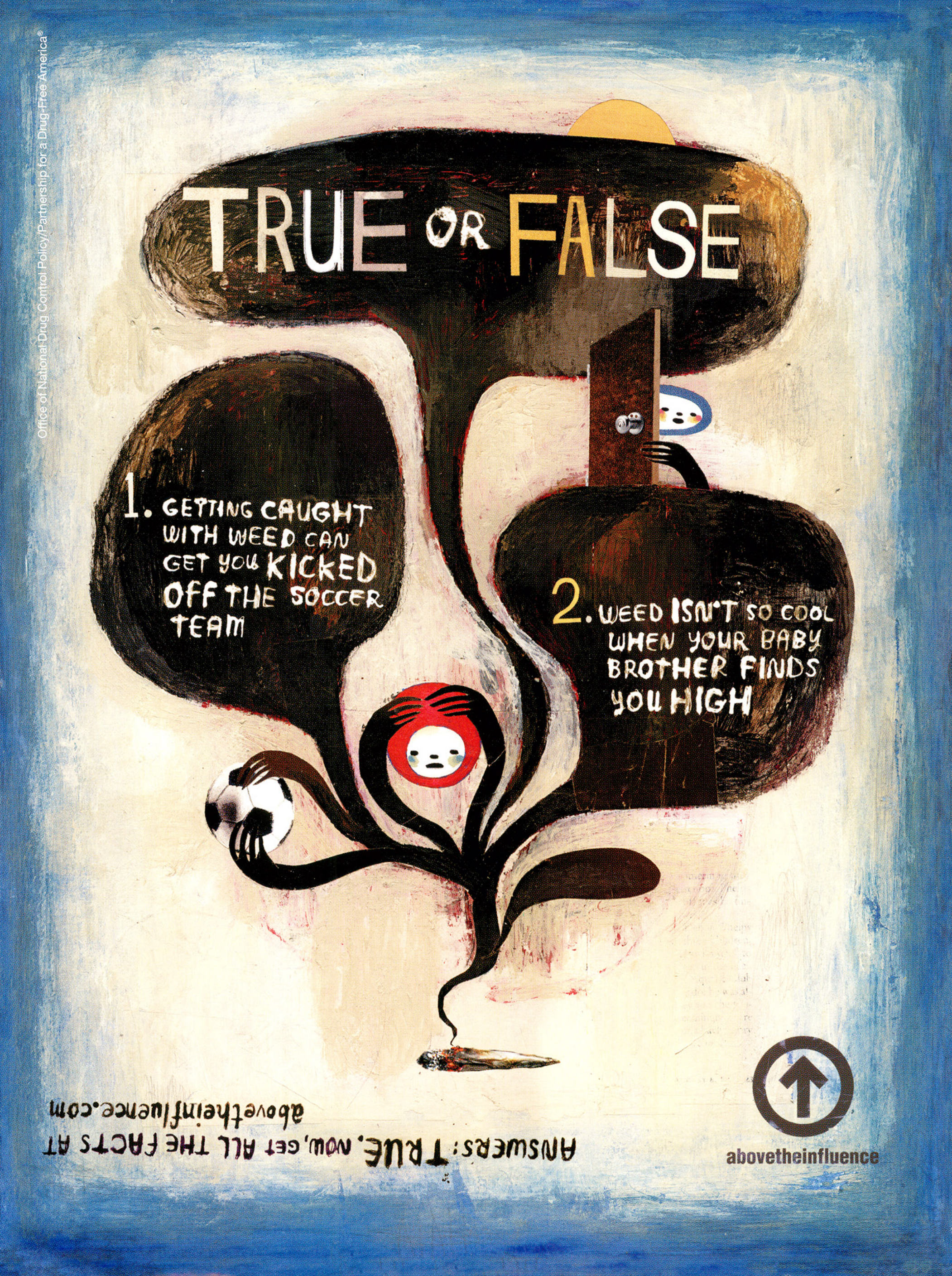
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2. WEED ISN'T SO COOL WHEN YOUR BABY BROTHER FINDS YOU HIGH
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abovetheinfluence.com
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Office of National Drug Control Policy/Partnership for a Drug-Free America®

COMING THIS FALL

BIG TROUBLE FOR A LITTLE HERO

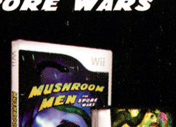
OCTOBER 14TH

NOVEMBER 11TH

WITNESS THE BIRTH OF THE MUSHROOM MEN IN THE
RISE OF THE FUNGI

THEN IT GETS PERSONAL - JOIN PAX IN
THE SPORE WARS

MUSHROOM MEN™ IN THE SPORE WARS AND RISE OF THE FUNGI



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